TheVillage

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NEWS & FEATURES from Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Blackwell, Burcot Beoley, Cofton Hackett, Finstall, Hopwood, Bordesley, Rowney Green, Lickey, Lickey End, Marlbrook, The Oakalls & everywhere in between!

TheVillage Issue 245 June 2024

inside

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Front cover: The heron makes a catch on the canal in Alvechurch, taken by Mark Easter, of Rowney Green.

DR DAVID
NICHOLL
Liberal Democrats

THE LOCAL DOCTOR WHO WILL FIGHT TO GET THINGS DONE FOR BROMSGROVE CONSTITUENCY

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PROTECT OUR GREENBELT
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"On 4th July we will get the opportunity to vote for change in Bromsgrove. I am backing local Dr David Nicholl"
- Siobhan from Bromsgrove

"David lives locally and has been campaigning for years here, we need an MP who is rooted in the community like David."
- James from Bromsgrove

Published and promoted by Josh Robinson on behalf of David Nicholl (Liberal Democrats) all at 53 Bewell Head, Bromsgrove, B61 8HX.

WHEN ORGANISERS of village "D-Day 80" comemorations discovered a "beacon" to help mark the occasion would cost around £2,500, they called in a new Men in Sheds group.

Two members of the group, currently being formed in Alvechurch, Gordon Brady, aged 77, and Bob Dunn, aged 80, with a lot of help from Gordon's son Adam made one in Gordon's garage – for less than £300, the cost of materials.

It will now be raised on an 8ft post at Alvechurch Cricket Club for the event on June 6, which begins at 6.30pm as the clubhouse opens, with the lighting of the beacon after pipers and the reading of the tribute at 9.15pm.

Quality workmanship: The beacon is lifted by (from left) Gordon, Adam, event organiser Brett Shepherd, Rob Morgan, of the cricket club, and Bob.

Homes storm brewing

VILLAGE COUNCILLOR QUITS CABINET OVER STRATEGIC PLAN

THE SPECTRE OF "Barntchurch" has returned to haunt our villages as a major row over long-term housing plans threatens to erupt.

A senior member of Bromsgrove Disctict Council has resigned from the cabinet, stating that he is taking a stand over proposed strategic housing plans.

But Coun Charlie Hotham, an independent who represents Barnt Green and Hopwood ward, has declined to make any further comment on why he has quit.

He told Alvechurch Parish councillors: "I have resigned from the cabinet on a matter of principle over the strategic plan, which I can't go into."

Similarly, he told Barnt Green Parish Council, where he is also the vice-chairman: "I have resigned from the cabinet because I was very unhappy about the way the strategic plan review is shaping up, so felt I could not be part of the cabinet at this moment. I am still actively trying to influence what is going on."

Coun Hotham would not give any further details when asked by *The Village*, leaving open the question of what could be so worrying about the ideas – currently still unknown publicly – that are coming from the strategic planning department of Bromsgrove council.

While they are unlikely to be as extreme as the idea of a "garden/town village" of 10,000-15,000 homes on Green Belt fields between Alvechurch and Barnt Green, proposed in 2018 and dubbed "Barntchurch", the potential repercussions of the proposals are serious enough for Coun Hotham to take the decision to quit over them.

The next few weeks will be crucial as the process of reviewing the district local plan, stretching back around seven years, moves into the consultation phase.

More than 400 locations for building homes have been put forward since a "call for sites" in 2019, and Bromsgrove council says all have now been assessed.

It adds: "The council is now in a position to announce that we are expecting to publish a consultation document this summer which will set out the planning strategy for Bromsgrove District for the next 15 to 20 years. The full details including the summer consultation dates will be confirmed shortly."

The whole 9 minutes

OBJECTORS TO a scheme to turn a former village social club into a 28-room bed and breakfast hotel are hoping that personal appeals to planning councillors will turn the vote their way.

The application for the site known as the Alvechurch Inn, requiring construction of a two-story extension in the Alvechurch Conservation Area, is likely to be determined by Bromsgrove District Council's planning committee on June 4th.

The scheme has received at least 133 objections from concerned villagers, from Alvechurch Parish Council and from Alvechurch Residents Association, which organised a "Stop the Blot" campaign against the plans.

There are three opportunities available at the planning committee meeting for representatives to speak in person for three minutes and, Alvechurch Parish Council heard, all three are to be used.

District councillor Charlie Hotham said he would be airing objections, as did James Brown, of the residents association.

Coun Hotham told parish councillors: "Actually being there restating your objections in person gives much more weight. It will generate much more debate among the committee than if you do not turn up: turning up is absolutely vital.

"In person, in three minutes you can really, really emphasise why this development should not happen. Then you get nine minutes in total saying why this should not be approved."

Parish councillor Steve Hornsby said he saw the effect at the Redditch planning committee meeting that turned down plans for a large housing estate in Hither Gran Lane, Bordesely.

"What was said from the public completely changed the mood of that meeting against the planning officer's proposal to approve that particular development and changed the mood so significantly that the committee voted unanimously against the proposal," he explained.

"I think it is important that we do go to because otherwise our objections are lost in the middle of a 180-page document," he added.

Afer some discussion, the parish council decided they should send a representative to the planning meeting to speak to their objections to the plan.

Coun Tony Williams offered to attend the planning meeting to voice the parish council's objections and council chairman Marc Worral said the parish's own planning sub-committee would be meeting beforehand to decide how to use the three minutes.

THE NEW Mayor of the West Midlands, Richard Parker (above), may already be familiar to some readers – because he is a Barnt Green villager.

He has been living in Birmingham during weekdays for some time in the run-up to his famous victory against Andy Street and his role will presumably continue to keep him away from village life. So much so that Richard has given up his membership of Kings Norton Golf Club, in Weatheroak.

Lifts start 'this winter'

A PACKED village meeting heard that work to install passenger lifts at Barnt Green station would begin this winter, almost a decade late.

More than 50 residents crammed into the Friends Meeting House to hear the Network Rail "project sponsor" say: "We are moving forward at pace. We are very close."

Simon Clifford added: "We have a fully funded scheme. We are aiming to commence work over the winter."

His pledge was met with some scepticism from some of those present at the Barnt Green Annual Parish Meeting.

Coun Charlie Hotham pointed out: "We have had promise, after promise, after promise – we are just fed up.

"And now you are saying this might go on until February next year - and prior to tonight we were told that it would be this summer.

"So what guarantee can you give us that these lifts will be installed by February? We want you to promise that these lifts will be installed."

Mr Clifford replied: "Winter 2024 is where we are and when we will be starting."

In response to a question from the floor of what would happen were there a change of Government, Mr Clifford said: "An allocation has been ring-fenced for the scheme. We stand by the commitment. We will have the construction drawings ready at the end of July."

Coun Hotham added: "There is no end to the ridiculousness of what has come back to the parish council about these lifts. At one point we were told the platform was too low and would have to be raised at a cost of millions.

"I hope that tonight marks the end of such ridiculousness."

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Tech 'holding back' parish bus access

RELIANCE on digital technology in the provision of bus services is creating a sense of isolation among the elderly and disabled, a study into transport needs in Alvechurch parish has found.

Around one quarter of the 243 people who responded to the survey do not, or are unable to, use the internet, meaning they are unable to access timetables using QR codes at bus stops.

"Residents want physical timetables," found the survey, which was instigated by the three independent district councillors representing the people of the parish.

The survey also found there is limited awareness of both community transport and public bus services operating in Alvechurch and the surrounding area.

It found residents also want services beyond the new, improved 182/183 through the villages between Redditch and Birmingham, in particular they would like a service into Birmingham city centre similar to that previously provided by the 146.

Overall, the survey was "positively received by residents and provides a very useful pointer towards better public transport provision and increased patronage".

Copies of the full survey and results can be viewed at Alvechurch Library and The Lounge community hub.

Summer warning

A VILLAGE centre is facing a summer of chaos as its high street is dug up to replace the gas main.

"If you think Bittell Road is bad now, you have got worse to come," Barnt Green parish chairman Robert Cholmondeley told the parish council's May meeting.

"Cadent are replacing all of the gas mains in Barnt Green. They will need to dig outside Tesco and the road will be closed while they are doing it – shopkeepers will be up in arms.

"It will be different sections of road they will be closing one after the other."

The work is expected to take 35 weeks, said Coun Cholmondeley, finishing in February 2025, which means a start date around the beginning of July.

20mph demand

PARISH councillors in Alvechurch are pressing newly re-elected Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion to "honour his commitment" to making West Mercia Police enforce 20mph speed limits.

Parish chairman Marc Worrall said "Now that elections are over, this is a good time for him to reassess his priorities. He should be telling West Mercia police that they should be enforcing 20mph limits whether they like if or not."

Fruitful idea

BEOLEY PARISH Council is appealing for residents to help to create an orchard in the parish-owned field in the village.

"We believe this is a wonderful opportunity to use the space we have in a way that will benefit the local community and the environment," said the council.

"To make this happen we need members of the community to help. We will need help planting the trees and with the ongoing maintenance."

The initiative is made possible by county council funding secured through the Coronation Living Heritage Fund. Anyone interested in helping can email the parish clerk at: clerk@beoleypc.org.uk

Calagate update

A DEVELOPMENT in the Calagate saga, where a housbuilder has installed a locked gate preventing access to public open space in Barnt Green, was expected by the end of last month.

Coun Charlie Hotham, who has been pursuing doggedly the matter at the Foxhills estate on Fiery Hill Road, told parish councillors he had been approached by the Bromsgrove planning officer overseeing the case to say "she is expecting something at the end of this month". He added: "Normally I have to chase her for information, but this was unsolicited."

Another year

ALVECHURCH Parish Council chairman Marc Worall was re-elected for another year amid news of a complaint about him from a member of the public. Coun Worrall told colleagues: "Personally, I am not worried because I can't think of any issue." Two councillors abstained and five voted for Coun Worrall.

No-No-Mow bonus

A NO-GO FOR No-Mow May caused by illness among Bromsgrove's grass cutting team means Alvechurch villagers will be able to identify more easily the "naturalisation" of nine verges, which is still going ahead, the parish council heard.

BEOLEY PARISH Council has a new chairman and vice-chairman, with Trevor Bland standing down after 14 years in the chair.

The previous vice-chairman James Urry (pictured in the chain of office) has stepped up to be chairman, and Adam Rock (left) is now the vice-chairman.

Among initiatives they will be overseeing will be the 80th D-Day comemorations on June 6, with "Lamplights of Peace" being lit at three parish locations at 9.15pm – all members of the community welcome.

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WHAT'S THAT SKUNK?

Dear Editor – On one of my recent walks around the village and its environs I found what to me was a very unusual plant, an American Skunk Cabbage *(pictured below)*.

Knowing very little about the plant I was hoping that Mary Green could help with some information about the plant.

Terry Louch
Alvechurch

I can't always do garden plants but I do know about this one!

Skunk cabbage is common in ornamental gardens, especially near water (there's lots at Winterbourne Gardens for example).

It's very striking and bright, looking a bit like a big cuckoo-pint. Unfortunately like a lot of non-native plants it is invasive when it gets out into the countryside, crowding out native plants.

It shouldn't be allowed to escape into the wild and has become quite a nuisance in some places, for example on the edges of the Lickeys. It spreads rapidly and can thrive in many environments. It is a known invasive plant and in some areas is out of control.

Mary Green

Read more from Mary on page 31.

Let's look smart for summer

Dear Editor – I'd like to address my letter to "Business Owners in Hewell Road, Barnt Green".

Last Saturday was a lovely day weather-wise, with the shops and cafes in Hewell Road being very busy with cyclists and families all enjoying the atmosphere. It made me think again how lucky we are to live in Barnt Green. However, regrettably the state of the shop frontages leaves a lot to be desired!

There are so many weeds in the gutters, on the frontages, in the drains, round the bollards etc. Dead hanging baskets from last year still there. . . I appreciate businesses are busy – which is great – but it doesn't take too long to pull out a few weeds! No business has a very lengthy frontage to make it a big job either.

Obviously this is not all the businesses I must say that. The same few every year make sure their frontages are kept tidy. Thank you to those who care. Some frontages are managed by external agents, I realise that too.

I am sure there are many residents who feel the same too. No one is expecting The Chelsea Flower Show but it would be so good to see an improvement if possible please.

JJ , Barnt Green

A rewarding path

Dear Editor – My wife and I embarked on a foster care journey nearly four years ago, and felt compelled to share the importance of embracing this rewarding pathway and rallying behind foster carers in our community.

For nearly 20 years, the idea of becoming foster carers lingered in our minds, yet, it took an encounter with a young mother, who herself had experienced the foster care system, to ignite the flame of action within us. We realised that we had the capacity to make a tangible difference in the lives of vulnerable children.

The journey to becoming foster carers is not without its challenges, but it is one paved with support and guidance every step of the way. Upon approval, foster carers undergo specialised training tailored to support the unique needs and circumstances of children in care.

This training equips you with the skills and knowledge necessary to create a nurturing and stable environment for the children entrusted to their care. It's not merely about providing a roof over their heads; it's about fostering emotional resilience, building trust, and nurturing growth.

As foster carers, we've had the privilege of supporting five children, each bringing their own unique story and set of challenges. Y

et, amidst the trials, we've witnessed the profound impact of community support. Our friends, family, and the close-knit rural community we call home have rallied around us, offering unwavering support and solidarity.

If you're reading this, I implore you to consider the profound impact you can make by supporting foster care initiatives in your community.

Speak to foster carers, listen to their stories, and discover the power of empathy and compassion in action.

If you have the space and time, consider going above and beyond the norm for your community. Stand with foster carers, advocate for their needs, and become a beacon of hope for children in need of a loving and stable home. Together, we can bridge the gap between adversity and opportunity, and in doing so, we can create a brighter and more compassionate future for all.

There is a ripple effect to our actions; by embracing the rewarding path of foster care and supporting our community in diverse ways, we sow the seeds of hope and resilience, fostering a culture of compassion that transcends boundaries and transforms lives.

I implore villagers who are able, to reach out to your Worcestershire Councillor for more information.

Danny and Vicky Bromage,
Barnt Green

Where's my sparkling service?

Dear Editor – I read the article: "A Sparkling Service", which referred to Diamond buses number 182 and 183, in the May issue of *The Village* with great interest.

I feel councillors haven't researched all the areas previously used under the system with drivers from Kidderminster. I have used this service for a long time, and the two regular drivers knew me.

Letters continue overleaf

Have your say . . . about anything!

email: editor@villageonline.co.uk

Please include your name and address – even if you request them to be withheld from publication.
We reserve the right to edit submissions for reasons of space or legality.
The deadline for the next issue is June 15th 2024.

WHERE'S VINNY?

GEORGE SMITH, aged three, from Alvechurch, shows off the Mini Vinny he won for finding the little creature in May's hunt the hedgehog competition in *The Village* magazine.

If you want to win one for yourself, you'll need to try to find the little hedgehog hiding somewhere in this magazine (the one shown above is just a guide).

Tell us where he's hiding via email – see details on the bottom of the page opposite – and please include your name, address and phone number, and we'll draw a winner at random.

The closing date is midnight on June 15 2024. We'll let you know if you've won and you can collect your Mini Vinny from our office – and pose for a photo with your prize!

continues from previous page

I used the service usually on Tuesdays and Fridays and from where I live – not far from the junction of Sandhills Green, Sandhills Lane and Sandhills Road – I crossed the road opposite my house at 10.45am and a bus came within 10 minutes, which was a great help to me as I don't walk well.

The bus took me up Bittell Lane and along Sandhills Road, into the centre of Barnt Green where I usually got off at Station Approach and made my way along the road. I ususally had to walk home but preferred this to the walk into the village centre – I have a very good shopping trolley.

Now I don't have a bus to help and miss it a lot, and now my left knee is particularly painful after the two walks – I have had to get a taxi a couple of times which, of course, is more costly.

I also question the new route from Alvechurch which is shorter, and very quiet with few properties and has the little bridge over the canal. I'm told by the bus company that the route was planned by Bromsgrove District Council, who I feel may not be aware of some weight restrictions for this bridge.

I rang the district council and asked for the transport department to be told they didn't have one!

The old route went up the main road to Hopwood, down Bittell Farm Road, into Bittell Road then up Bittell Lane into Sandhills Road and the village. I read there have been adjustments made to the route but nothing to include my road! I was 90 in February – I am told I look years younger – but my legs aren't good.

I'm also not keen on the new time, much later than I prefer, and I've been in the village for about 11.40am when I've already done two calls.

I am so cross with this "wonderful" new bus service that doesn't help me at all. Your comments would be appreciated.

M Witham
Barnt Green

Support the sanctuary

HILLFIELDS Animal Sanctuary in Blackwell is running two events to raise money to help its work looking after animals.

On Saturday 6 July at 7.30pm, they will be running a quiz night, in the marquee in the grounds of Burcot Grange Care Home. Tickets are £10 per person, with a maximum of 6 in a team.

There will be a prize raffle and cash prizes.

The following day on 7 July, Hillfields will be hosting an afternoon tea between 2-4pm also at Burcot Grange Care Home. There will be welcome drinks on arrival and a charity auction. Tickets are £10pp.

For more information or to book either of these events, contact Ingrid Bromley: 0121 447 8511 or 07944 083 216 or ingrid.bromley@talktalk.net.

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A step back in time

Did village life feel that different in 1944? Alvechurch resident Rona Dalley shared some history with *The Village* this month, as we look back at how the parish has changed over the past 80 years, and what we're missing now.

ALVECHURCH resident Rona Dalley, aged 80, contacted *The Village*, to share a piece of history from May 1944.

She showed us a copy of *The Parish Magazine of Alvechurch*, kept for her by her mother to commemorate her baptism in April 1944. Rona noted how village life had changed in the last 80 years, but while not much remains the same, there is still a strong sense of community in the parish.

The Parish Magazine was originally compiled by St Laurence church and includes a feature on Poesy Rings, "Home Words from the Bishop of Lichfield" and a list of births, marriages and deaths in the village.

Under the "Holy Baptism" section, on 9 April 1944 is Rona Cecilia Morris (now Rona Dalley), among other village names which some may remember, and some of whom may still live, or have relatives in the village today. Rona said she still regularly meets with school friends who live in the area, many still connected through community projects such as those run by *The Lounge*.

"My dear people", the Rector, Rev G.J.Hodgins addresses readers, as he updates the parish on the Parochial Church Meeting.

Mr Jessop, of High House Farm is thanked for offering to "stable any horses or ponies for those attending Church on Sundays" – a less frequently used form of transport to church on Sundays in 2024.

The upcoming church events are listed, as is the Women's Institute, which continues to this day, and a Whist Drive and Dance, organised by the British Legion (Women's Section) is advertised.

The "Weekday pages for women with homes" section, provides an insight into life in the 1940s – a stark contrast to today's age of search engines and online tutorials. It includes a list of jobs to do on each day of the week, submitted by readers, to help readers with tips for managing the week's housework, including:

Monday's Washing:

Your "mac": Lay your "mac" on the table and with a small nail brush and some warm soapy water, to which two tablespoons of ammonia have been added, go over it thoroughly. Fill sleeves with paper and hang out to dry - *Mrs Tackle*

Thursday's Cooking:

Chocolate cake: Sprinkle Bournville on top of any kind of chocolate cake just before putting it in the oven. This takes the place of icing and saves some sugar. Do not moisten the Bournville. - *E.M.J*

Friday's Household:

Coupon Books: To make it easier for shopkeepers to tear coupons out run the pages of your coupon book under the sewing machine without the needle threaded - *Mrs Roberts*

Something that isn't quite so dissimilar is (and appears in *The Village,* in fact) is the advertising of local businesses within the pages of *The Parish Magazine*.

"Hollington's skirt making service" by F.W. Hollington & Co. Ltd.

"You can whip our cream but you cannot beat our milk" says F.A. Hanks of Mayfield Dairy, Redditch Road.

"Have the news for breakfast". John B. Wilson & Sons Ltd High-Class Groceries and Provisions, located in The Square, Alvechurch.

C. Bartleet Newsagent, Tobacconist, in the Post Offeice, Alvechurch.

80 years of Alvechurch: Rona shows off *The Parish Magazine.*

Rona, who has lived in Alvechurch for her whole life told *The Village* that life here has changed considerably: "If you look in the back of the magazine it lists all of the shops Alvechurch used to have: a post office, a bakers and a grocers and so on.

"We don't have any of that any more, it would be wonderful to have some more shops return to the village. It's such a shame they're not there anymore and we have to go to neighbouring towns and villages."

Speaking of the current shops in Alvechurch, Rona said: "Clayton Fern's butchers is a fantastic shop in the village centre and he will be sorely missed when he retires in June, I don't think he knows how much he's valued. And The Lounge is a wonderful cafe, it really cares about the community and works hard to bring people together".

So while much has changed in the area, and there are more families and houses than ever, Rona wonders if the infrastructure will ever return to support the community?

HIGHEST STANDARD IN THE AESTHETICS INDUSTRY

Village business owner Nicky Robinson, of **NR Aesthetics & Skin Ltd**, recently achieved CQC registration, marking a milestone in UK aesthetics regulation.

At outstanding achievement in UK aesthetics: Nicky Robinson celebrates her CQC registration.

NICKY Robinson, the founder of NR Aesthetics & Skin Ltd and a qualified nurse and midwife with more than 30 years of experience, is pleased to announce her clinic's recent achievement of CQC (Care Quality Commission) registration.

Since its establishment in 2017, NR Aesthetics & Skin has garnered a reputation for excellence, growing steadily under Nicky's expertise.

CQC registration marks a significant milestone for Nicky and NR Aesthetics & Skin Ltd, demonstrating her steadfast commitment to providing high-quality care while meeting essential standards of safety and effectiveness.

In an industry that Nicky says is lacking in regulation, this achievement underscores the clinic's dedication to ensuring the wellbeing of its clients.

She says the UK aesthetics industry faces challenges due to it's inadequate regulation, particularly in non-surgical cosmetic treatments such as fillers and anti-wrinkle injections.

Without stringent regulation, there's a risk of untrained or unqualified practitioners performing procedures, leading to potential health risks and complications for clients. Nicky recognises these challenges and is committed to upholding the highest standards of practice and safety for her clients.

Nicky also holds the SAVE FACE accreditation with platinum status and serves as the West Midlands Regional Leader for the British Association of Cosmetic Nurses.

Additionally, she is a member of two medical expert complication groups and serves as a committee member of the Joint Council for Cosmetic Practitioners (JCCP), advocating for improved regulation within the industry.

NR Aesthetics & Skin offers a range of treatments, including dermal fillers, polynucleotides, skincare, microneedling as well as being a Profhilo accredited clinic and more.

Nicky's focus on natural aesthetics and safety ensures that clients receive expert care in a secure environment.

As one of only a few registered independent aesthetics practitioners in the UK, Nicky prides herself in delivering exceptional care, setting the standard for excellence in the aesthetics industry.

Handling the heat

Dr Heidi Kerr and Dr Vicky Hobbs, from **VHK Women's Health Clinic**, give their top tips on how to handle the summer heat and enjoy your holidays, especially if you're experiencing symptoms of menopause or peri-menopause.

Don't let the heat ruin your summer: Dr Heidi Kerr and Dr Vicky Hobbs can help.

WE are now into the summer season and whist the warm and sunny days can encourage us to get outdoors and active for peri-menopausal and menopausal women the hot weather is not always a blessing.

This month we talk through some of the common questions asked around management of your symptoms during the heat of summer.

Does hot weather make symptoms of menopause worse?

Not all women suffer with hot flushes and night sweats as part of their menopausal transition, but for women who do, when the ambient temperature is warmer they are likely to be more sensitive to this and the intensity of the hot sweats can increase.

We can all be sensitive to the very hot weather that has occurred in British summer time over the past few years, not just menopausal women and the very young and elderly are also very sensitive to extreme temperatures.

Our general recommendation for menopausal women is to wear thin cotton clothing, have access to a small hand-held fan and use cold drinks to help support temperature regulation and sudden flushes.

At night, having a cool bedroom can really help – this is not always easy when temperatures climb – but consider several thin layers of bedding that can be easily added or removed whist in bed and have a bedside fan or open window if safe to do so.

I'm going on holiday and am worried about being hot and bothered whist away – is there anything I can do and how do I best protect myself in the heat?

When going to a hot country for a holiday it is not only the heat but also the humidity that can impact on temperature regulation. The sun is strongest between 11am and 3pm and we recommend trying to avoid being in direct sunlight during these times.

Do ensure the use of high factor sun cream with regular application through the day, wear a sun hat with a wide brim so your face, neck and ears are fully protected and UV protection sunglasses.

Many women notice their skin becoming more sensitive to heat and the sun during menopause so protection from direct sunlight when it is at its strongest is key.

Sit in the shade and try to time activities to the mornings or later in the day when the temperature drops a little. This will help to protect your skin and manage your flushes in the heat.

Some women notice alcohol is a trigger for hot flushes and night sweats so if you are struggling with managing them in the heat think about the delicious non-alcoholic cocktails as a possible alternative to improve sleep and help you feel more in control of your symptoms and if you are on HRT ensure you take it with you when you go on holiday!

At what point should I seek out help for my peri-menopausal or menopausal symptoms?

We always encourage women to look at self-care and lifestyle to support symptom control.

The role of regular exercise in the form of a brisk walk, yoga, cardiovascular gym work and weight training should never be underestimated and should be used alongside any medical support for symptom control, but we would encourage all women to seek help if they feel their symptoms are impacting negatively on their quality of life.

At VHK Women's Health Clinic we are able to undertake a comprehensive review of your symptoms and offer tailored treatment options to support the menopausal transition, including HRT management, the role of testosterone, managing heavy periods and vaginal dryness.

If you would like to know more, or to book an appointment please go to our website: www.vhkwomenshealth.com or email:

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THE GRAND RE-OPENING

The Mill, in Alvechurch, will soon have a new lease of life, when **Millhouse Clinics** reopens under new owners. The clinic will offer high quality aesthetics treatments by a skilled team of practitioners who are excited to make their home in the village.

millhouse clinics
ALVECHURCH

Specialist treatments provided at Millhouse Clinics: Semi-permanent lip blushing and Laser hair removal.

MICHELLE Burke started her married life as a nurse in Alvechurch 32 years ago. With her husband, Michelle ran a successful healthcare business for 18 years, when he sadly passed away, and she found a new passion in the world of aesthetics.

Since 2012, Michelle has been providing clients with outstanding treatments, specialising in laser hair removal and skincare, working closely with skin brand Obagi.

For the last 11 years, Michelle has worked alongside Sharon Hynes, a nurse prescriber, who moved from theatre nursing into aesthetics 14 years ago. Sharon has long-standing clients from across the Midlands and the North-West of England.

Michelle met Daniel Johnson five years ago and together, they decided to take on a new challenge in Millhouse Clinics.

Daniel offers tailored approaches to aesthetics through advanced treatments including Tear Trough, Liquid Rhinoplasty and Jawline Augmentation-along with other injectables.

Caroline Wild joins the team, with seven years experience performing semi-permanent make-up and camouflage of scarring and 3D medical nipple tattoo.

Collectively, the team had started looking for a clinic to expand their holistic treatments when the opportunity arose to move their clinic into The Mill on Radford Road.

Michelle, who moved away from the area to Warwick in 2014, said: "I've always felt drawn back to Alvechurch; it's a village brimming with happy memories and it's the perfect place. I'm thrilled to be returning."

The aim of the clinic is to bring highly skilled practitioners together under one roof to help clients be the best versions of themselves.

The list of services offered at Millhouse Clinics is expected to grow throughout the coming year and the team are in talks with several practitioners who will offer a range of further treatments and services.

On their move to the village, Michelle said: "All the team are excited to work alongside each other and share our knowledge, and you will definitely be seeing us out enjoying all that Alvechurch has to offer."

YOU'RE INVITED

Millhouse Clinics welcomes all visitors to find out more about the treatments they offer, including:

- Advanced facials
- HydraFacial
- Chemical peels
- Microblading
- Semi-permanent make-up
- Laser hair removal
- Acne/iPixel/Tattoo removal/laser facials
- Injectables

And many more, at their official opening event.

The open day will be held on Saturday 29th June at The Mill, Alvechurch between 1–4pm, and will be an informal, relaxed day.

Current clients and villagers will receive a warm welcome, and have the opportunity to meet Michelle, Daniel, Sharon and Caroline, chat about their roles and see inside the beautiful Millhouse Clinic.

At this free event, visitors will have the opportunity to have their skin analysed with a skin care specialist from Obagi who will demonstrate skin elasticity, collagen, sun damage and our products.

Visitors will also be able to enjoy prosecco and nibbles, and there will be gift bags for the first 60 visitors. The team can't wait to meet you!

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CASE STUDY 1: Independent Older Adults*

Mr John H, age 68, Retired Engineer
Situation: Mr. John wanted to maintain his health and independence without clinic visits.
Action: Dr. Protherough conducted a health assessment, identifying minor memory lapses and cardiovascular monitoring needs.
Result: "Dr. Protherough's visit was thorough. She adjusted my diet and exercise, improving my memory and energy. Her heart health advice was insightful." - Mr. John

CASE STUDY 2: Relatives concerned about their parents*

The Thompson Family, Concerned About Their 72-Year-Old Mother
Situation: The Thompsons were worried about their mother's forgetfulness and low energy.
Action: Dr. Protherough visited their mother at home for a full review, communicating via secure video call.
Result: "Dr. Protherough's service was a blessing. She adjusted our mother's medications, conducted dementia blood tests and an MRI, with this information she referred her to a psychiatrist for a diagnosis of dementia." - The Thompson Family

CASE STUDY 3: Neuro concerns*

Ms Linda B, age 75, Former School Principal
Situation: Concerns grew over Ms. Linda's falls.
Action: Dr. Protherough conducted a neurological evaluation and coordinated an MRI with a neurologist.
Result: "Dr. Protherough detected early signs of a neurodegenerative disorder. Her follow-up care in conjunction with a neurologist and strategies have helped stabilize my mother's symptoms and give us a plan for the future." - Linda's Daughter

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*These are fictional but typical cases.

In an English country garden

THE National Garden Scheme is already well underway across the country, and you may have seen yellow boards popping up, notifying of open gardens in the area. The scheme raises money for charities including Marie Curie, MacMillan and Hospice UK.

Between 27–28 July, three local gardens will be available to explore between 12–4pm.

In Weatheroak, the garden ofPond House is full of artistic innovation and creative use of reclaimed materials. There is a topiary garden which leads to large natural pond.

The second garden in Weatheroak, Pump Cottage, is an enchanting one-acre garden for plantlovers, including seven water features, a large natural pond and wildlife area.

In Wythall, Joe's Garden, which has previously featured on "Gardener's World" is dedicated to woodland and shade loving plants, with lots of statues and unusual features.

An explosion of colour: At Pump Cottage, Weatheroak.

All the gardens are packed with interest and creative features to delight both the casual gardener or the plantaholic. Unfortuantely there is no wheelchair access at Joe's Garden, and some areas at Pond House and Pump Cottage are wheelchair restricted. Plenty of homemade teas and cakes will be available. For further information and ticket prices, visit the website: findagarden.ngs.org.uk or contact Barry Knee: barryknee.1947@btinternet.com.

Cofton's hidden church

SOME villagers will be unaware that at St Michael's Church in Cofton Church Lane, there is an ancient churchyard.

This is also the burial ground where all eligible residents of the two parishes of Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett can ask to be buried or have their ashes interred.

There are a few paradoxes about the place – although the church dates back to the 14th Century, and is at the end of a seemingly rural track, it has sat for over 175 years next to the main West Coast railway line, where dozens of trains a day, fast and slow, push noisily past.

For half a century on another boundary sat the main engine plant of the Austin, then Rover, car factory, loomed – now the site of the new St Modwen housing development at Cofton.

Nevertheless, the churchyard has steadfastly kept its quiet, timeless character, linking the past to the present. Surrounded by majestic old trees, the ground comes alive with snowdrops in late winter, then glows with daffodils in early spring and enjoys the vibrant colour and scent of bluebells as spring progresses into summer.

An eco group, set up by the churches of Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett promotes thought and action about biodiversity, "green initiatives" and care for the natural world. The parish has just received a Silver Award from *A Rocha*, a body prominent in the field of environmental care.

Recent initiatives have included the drawing-up of a management plan for ongoing care of the area, the creation of a new orchard featuring heritage fruit trees from the local area and the setting-up of bird and bat boxes.

As well as this, the policy of leaving large areas of grass un-mown till mid-June enables the full blooming of wild flowers and encourages the growth of a wider range of plants and the sustaining of wildlife.

On 9 June, there will be a nature count in the churchyard, part of a national survey of the range of wild plants, birds, and other wildlife. As many volunteers as possible are invited to join in and take part on the day.

There are also regular work parties organised by the eco group, to help in maintaining the area as a safe and accessible, but also a natural and beautiful space. The Parochial Church Council relies on parishioners' generosity in the carrying out of its obligations and is also grateful for any support from the local parish councils, in whose area St Michael's churchyard provides a wonderful facility for all.

Details for volunteering can be found at: standrewscofe.org.uk/weekly-leafletnewsletter/

Two boards were recently unveiled at the top of Cofton Hackett and Rednal, dedicated to the village and its history. The boards also celebrate the heyday of the trams, which rumbled through the village. The last remaining tracks, which lay close by, are still visible to the public.

At their unveiling Mike Brookes, chair of the Lickey Hills Society, gave an introduction about the boards, before handing over to Baden Carison (pictured centre), who was also immortalised as one of the figures on the board.

Image/Keith Woolford

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CARE HOME *open week*
Why not come and visit Burcot on the 25th June between 10:00am and 4:00pm, view our beautiful homes, gardens with a plethora of beautiful flowers and plant life and meet our caring teams

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telephone: 0121 445 5552, or visit: burcotgrange.co.uk

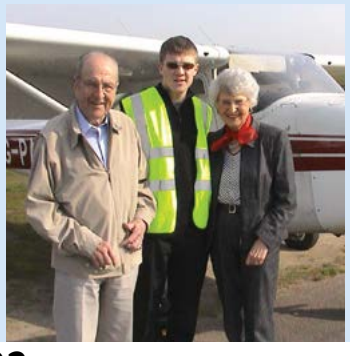
20 From TheVillage archive Years Ago

OUR JUNE 2004 cover was a montage of postcards showing local scenes, from a collection owned by Barnt Green resident Edwin Gumbley. Several more were pictured inside, along with a piece by Edwin about the "golden age" of postcard collecting.

IN THE NEWS: Barnt Green was once again under threat from housing development, as Bromsgrove District Council's decision not to include the 12 acres of fields around the Barnt Green Inn in its District Local Plan was being challenged in the High Court.

Meanwhile, village residents had organised a petition calling for the 40mph speed limit between Cofton Hackett and Barnt Green to be reduced.

ALVECHURCH MIDDLE School pupils Hannah Peters, Lottie Peach and Beth Ingram (front row, above) were part of the Redditch United Girls team who won the Mercian League Under-10s Cup, beating Kidderminster side Ferndale Youth 3-1.



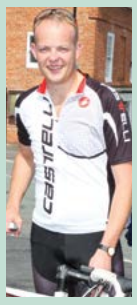
BARNT GREEN couple Dennis and Eileen Bates celebrated their 80th birthdays with a flight in a private plane. . . with 17-year-old grandson Mark at the controls.

10 From TheVillage archive Years Ago

OUR JUNE 2014 cover Featured bunting blowing beneath a blue sky on Meadow Lane, Alvechurch, welcoming picnickers to the annual Picnic in the Park. The 2024 picnic took place after this issue had gone to press, but we'll get some pictures from the festivities in the July/August issue of *The Village*.

A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN for the parish of Alvechurch was beginning to take shape as the group steering its progress absorbed the responses to a wide-ranging public questionnaire. Of the respondents, 93 per cent supported the vision for the plan, which aimed to wrest more control over any future development in the parish.

SAM WILLIAMS (right), of Aston Fields, was training to cycle from John O' Groats to Land's End to raise money for Dodford Children's Holiday Farm.



FOUR YEARS after being elected, village MP Sajid Javid was made Culture Secretary and told villagers at a drop-in session that he still had no designs on one day being leader of his party.

THE VILLAGE **magazine's "nag" (above) jostles for position in the Pantomime Horse Race at Alvechurch Picnic in the Park. It was the first and, so far, only outing for the horses, with spectacular pile-ups as the race was contested in a robust fashion.**

THIEVES' PARADISE A spate of thefts led one police detective to describe the Oakalls as being "a car supermarket" for thieves.

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FAMILY SHOOTING ACTIVITIES FOR SUMMER 2024

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VILLAGE athlete Sam Boswell (right), entering her first triathlon since surgery to remove a 5kg cancer, shocked herself and others by winning as first-placed female.

She "just wanted to enjoy the experience and raise money for charity" at the Black Country Sprint so the victory was unexpected.

Sam wrote the self-published book *Ironman, me and the big C* to help others and, as reported in *The Village* last month, is now raising funds and cancer awareness and has set up a page at justgiving.com for Sarcoma UK.

"My next scan is August and I just pray that everything will be clear, meanwhile I'll keep doing what I can when I can and hope I inspire others to do the same," said Sam.

A VERY ACTIVE contributor to the Barnt Green community, Sue Waller, passed away at her family home in March, aged 72.

Those who knew Sue, know she loved her life with her husband John, with whom she shared a very happy 48 years and very much loved the community of Barnt Green.

Sue moved to the village in 1986 with John and raised two children, James and Lyndsey, there. In her later years, she was a grandma to four grandchildren and enjoyed daily walks round the village with her dog, Bertie (above).

Sue was a great contributor to the village and cared greatly about and improving it for the community. She was the West Midlands Railway representative for Barnt Green, championing improvements to the station including the passenger lifts, installation of a water tap for flower beds and forging links with St Andrew's school to get children involved in the station and help to educate them on the environment.

For a long time, she was an active member of St Andrew's church and had previously helped with Sunday School, presentation lunches and on Church Committees.

Sue will be greatly missed and her hard work will live on in the community.

SHOOTING TO SUCCESS

AN ALVECHURCH under 13s football team, Alvechurch JH U13s, have been beating records and storming to success this season.

Managed by James Hancock, who is supported by Michael Jabbari and Bradley Widdows, the team have won two national competitions, followed up by winning both the Midlands Junior Premier League and Central Warwickshire Premier Division, undefeated, while breaking both all-time goal scoring records.

Their successes follow a disappointing season for the team last year in which they finished 11th and runners up in the MJPL Cup Final to the other club side in the same division (Alvechurch DD U13s) from a penalty shoot-out.

Following that heartbreak the boys had to regroup, they had seen three players signed into academy football and then had the challenge of adjusting from nine-aside to 11-aside football.

Michael Jabbari said: "We always said the best thing to happen was us losing that cup final because the boys learned a harsh lesson. You learn more from a loss than you do from a win."

After the defeat of the previous season, the team were entered into the ENG Tournament and the One Tournament, both national competitions, requiring qualifying in regionals.

After a shaky group stage the team went all the way to become the ENG National Champions, playing the final in London.

The big One Tournament followed, and again after qualifying, they went on to the Nationals, hosted in Lilleshaw, Shropshire.

The boys showed their skills and determination on the day, going on to win the final 2-0 with a brace from Hayden Bayliss.

Going from strength to strength and with a stronger, new-found drive, they went on to win the MJPL with 19 wins, three draws and no losses.

They then won CWYFL with 15 wins, one draw and no losses, managing to break the all time top goal-scoring records in both leagues.

In May, the team once again faced the other Alvechurch clubs side, who had been dominant for years.

Once again both teams travelled to Rugby Borough for the final wiht friends, family and neutral supporters. Chances were missed by both, and Alvechurch JH found themselves 2-1 down at half time.

All three coaches offered encouragement and which was evidently taken it on board as within 10 minutes a brace from Jake Fair swung the game back in Alvechurch JH's favour.

A fantastic individual goal by Frankie Harris, was followed by goals from Hayden Bayliss and another from Ade Dennis.

Michael said: "The game was of the highest quality. The football from both sides in the first half was brilliant.

"To be honest, the boys played their best football of the season in the second half, you could see how much they wanted that result above anything else."

At the final whistle, it was Alvechurch JH who finished the season with the MJPL double and the CWYFL Premier Division Title.

Giving children opportunities has always been the priority for James, Michael and Brad, who said: "The extra training sessions have been invaluable, all tournaments and friendly that have been organised have made us more of a family than a team. Five days a week we're with each other which takes some commitment.

"Even the boys that go on to Academy football still come back to support the boys which says it all about how close they all are."

The team are now looking forward to next season, with some fantastic additions to take the places of the boys moving on, and they have also been offered an opportunity to represent Redditch United in the MJPL whilst continuing to represent Alvechurch in the CWYFL. . . What will be next for the Alvechurch JH U13s?

Smiles of a winning team: The team raise the trophy in victory.

Midland Junior Premier League: The boys celebrate their win.

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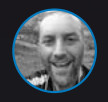
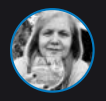
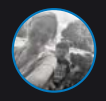


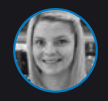
Martin Pryor
Financial Planner & Adviser



Nicky Lowndes
General Manager

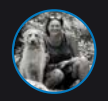


Laura Siddall
Financial Planner & Adviser

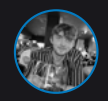


Laura Daniels
Mortgage Adviser

Louise Wheeler
Paraplanner



Jodie Morey
Office Administrator



Mitchell Thomas
Graduate Trainee Financial Advisor

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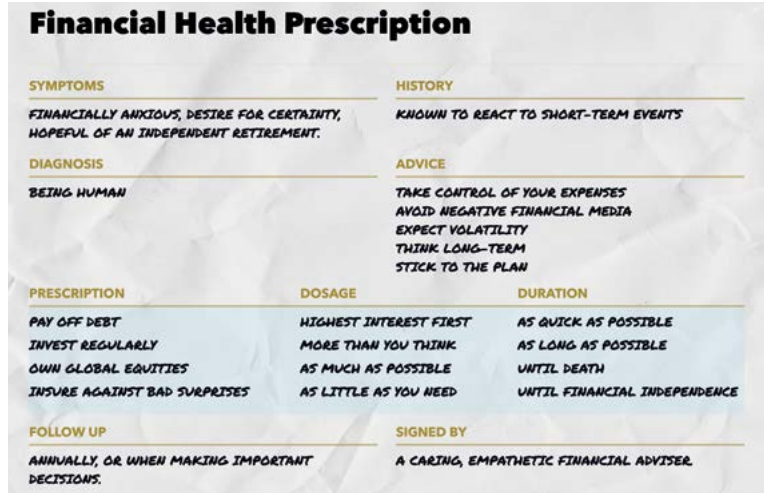
Your financial check up

Martin Pryor tells *The Village* how to perform financial first-aid.



THE parallels between medicine and personal finance are noteworthy, as both require discipline, prudence, and timely actions. Just as physical health depends on preventative care and informed decisions, monetary well-being relies on sound financial habits.

While every investor has unique circumstances and challenges, it's helpful to lay out the path for those who want to embark on a successful journey.

As we navigate our financial journey, having a clear and precise plan is paramount.

Today, we aim to provide just that with a well-crafted financial prescription. By mirroring a medical prescription, it aims to curb financial "bleeding" stabilise your finances, and guide you towards sustained financial health.

STOP THE BLEEDING

The first step in any financial recovery is to "stop the bleeding". Addressing poor-quality debt is crucial in this phase. High-interest debts can drain your budget and impact your ability to save. Pay your debts promptly, prioritise them appropriately, and prevent unnecessary financial stress.

Another crucial element in stopping the bleeding is controlling your expenses to avoid "lifestyle creep". A conscious effort to live within your means and forego unnecessary expenses can preserve your wealth in the long term. You can take tangible steps to control your spending by setting a budget and consciously tracking it.

An emergency fund is an underappreciated but vital part of any financial plan. It acts as a buffer against unexpected expenses and enables you to sustain financial shocks without going into debt.

Lastly, insure yourself against unexpected health surprises. This should not be considered an "extra cost" but a necessity. With this safety net in place, you can prevent health surprises from derailing your financial plan.

STABILISE THE PATIENT

Once you've effectively stopped the financial bleeding, it's time to stabilise your financial health.

Begin by "paying yourself first". This principle encourages you to invest regularly and even slightly more than you feel comfortable with. Invest wisely into diversified assets.

Investing in global equities makes you a part-owner of the Great Companies of the World. You know these companies because you likely buy their products regularly.

Owning a whole basket of them means you are diversified against any one company going out of business.

Make sure you understand what tax breaks are available to you. In most countries, this will be pensions and tax-free investment accounts. These offer valuable opportunities to increase your saving and investment potential.

PATH TO RECOVERY

Having stabilised your finances, the focus now shifts to long-term financial recovery and wealth building. This involves updating your financial plan at least annually. Regular updates ensure your plan adjusts to life changes and market fluctuations. Become a person who acts proactively rather than reacting emotionally to world events. Responding to market noise can lead to poor investment decisions caused by panic or euphoria. Instead, maintain a long-term perspective and let your financial plan guide your actions.

Understanding the financial side effects of being a long-term investor, especially market volatility, is paramount. Familiarise yourself with the idea that markets fluctuate naturally and that temporary declines are to be expected. A diversified portfolio can help insulate against these declines while benefiting from long-term market growth.

A WELL-TRODDEN PATH

The journey to financial success will require hard work and dedication, but it is achievable. There are no shortcuts to success, but every successful investor has walked the path laid out above.

By following the above prescription with consistent action and discipline, you'll be well on your way to achieving your cherished financial goals.

Martin Pryor
Lifestyle Financial Planner
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This article should not be regarded as personal advice. You should seek independent financial advice to apply these theories to your circumstances.

Why use a Mortgage Broker?

Mark Meads explains how Mortgage Brokers can help you find the right deal to fit your specific requirements, and how **Village Financial** are there to support you through the whole process.

SO what are the benefits of using a Mortgage Broker, like Village Financial? Let me explain...

Mortgage Brokers have relationships with multiple lenders and can offer a variety of mortgage products that may not be available directly to consumers. This increases the chances of finding a mortgage that fits the borrower's specific needs and financial situation.

Brokers have specialised knowledge and expertise in the mortgage industry. They can provide valuable advice on the best mortgage options, interest rates, and terms based on the borrower's financial profile and goals.

Mortgage Brokers handle much of the legwork involved in securing a mortgage, including gathering documents, completing applications, and communicating with lenders. This saves borrowers significant time and effort compared to managing the process on their own.

For borrowers with unique or challenging financial circumstances, such as adverse credit, self-employment, or unconventional income sources, a Mortgage Broker can identify suitable lenders and products that are more accommodating of these complexities, increasing the likelihood of mortgage approval.

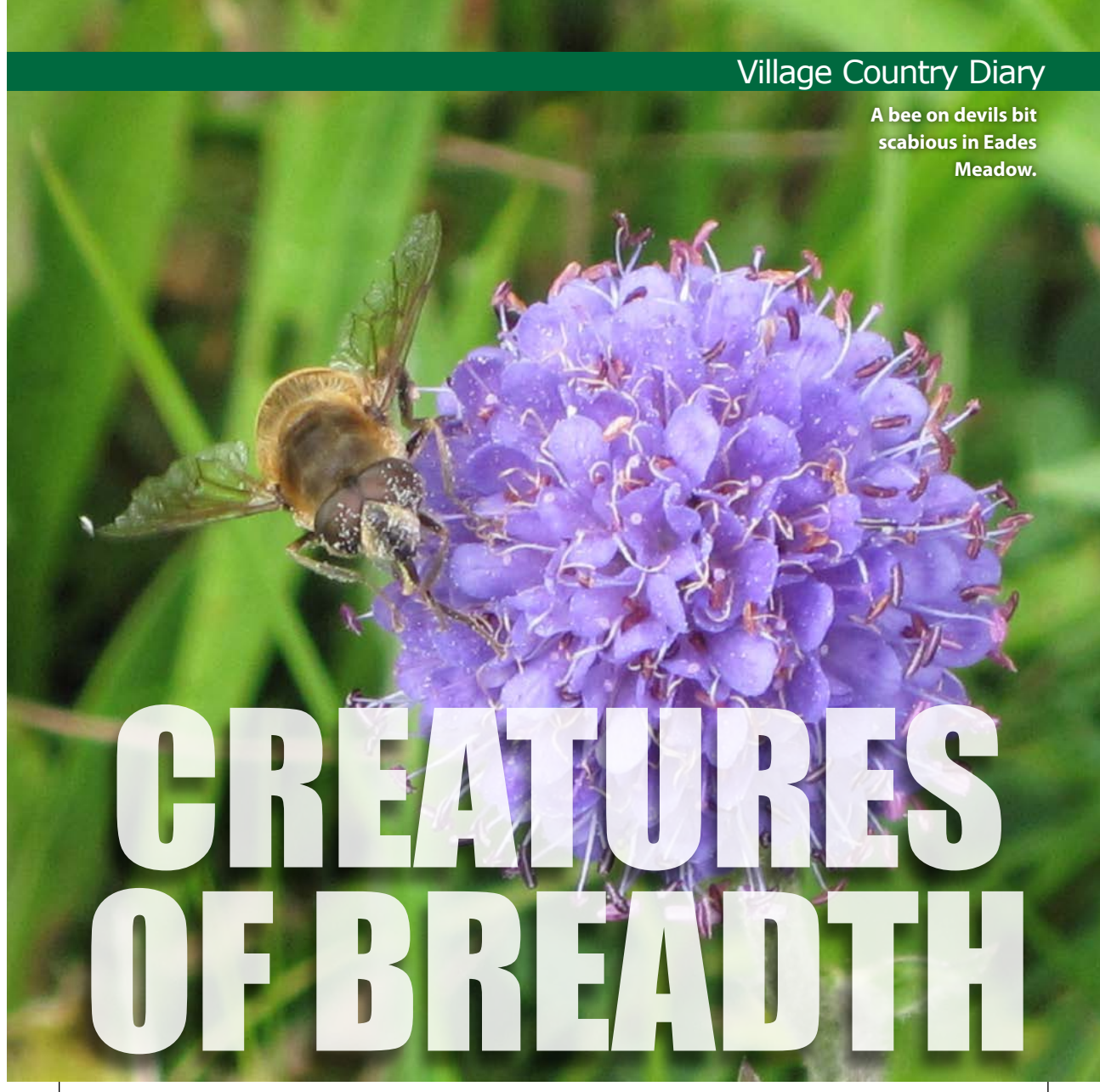
Once you become a client of ours we will be there every time your existing deal matures.

Mark Meads (above), and his team will help find the right mortage to fit your needs.

We will contact you well in advance and ensure you get the right deal for your circumstances, at that point in your life.

If you would like an initial discussion to see how we can help, please contact us on 07730 011 897 or through our website: www.villagefinancial.co.uk

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage



A bee on devils bit scabious in Eades Meadow.

CREATURES OF BREADTH

THIS month I will turn from the plant kingdom to the other major kingdom, animals. The collective animals of an area are called its "fauna." Some families and species of these date back for hundreds of millions of years, others (like us) began on earth more recently.

They all live with and depend on our "flora" or plant community. "Animals" comes from Latin and means creatures of breath, to distinguish them from plants.

There isn't really an Old English word for them as a group, so maybe they weren't seen as distinct. "Beasts" which comes from Old French included most of them, especially mammals, but definitely not humans!

There are two main parts to the animal kingdom – invertebrates (without backbones) and vertebrates

Mary Green takes us through the animal kingdom and the wild (slithering, scurrying, flying) creatures we can find around us.

(with backbones.) I don't know why the scientists a few centuries ago who started the classification of our living world decided that backbones were so important! Invertebrates are much older in the world's

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Above from left: A common blue butterfly feeds on the trefoil family. A skipper butterfly on hawkbit. A beetle blends into bright yellow tansy.

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history and there are many more of them, though we often overlook them. I was delighted to hear recently that there is a Society for the Preservation of Ugly Species!

Invertebrates include creatures like slugs and snails, worms, shellfish, spiders – and insects, perhaps the most numerous group.

Snails, including slugs which are a type of snail, are disliked but pay a vital part in ecology. They help keep the balance of plant life and themselves are eaten by birds, especially thrushes, and of course by hedgehogs.

It surprises people to find there are 100 or so species of snails and slugs in Britain, all needing slightly different plant habitats.

People used to eat snails, ordinary garden snails as well as the bigger Roman snail which occasionally appears in restaurants. And they have been used for centuries as medicines and cosmetics. Yet we are disparaging about them, calling them pests.

I think we all know now how important worms are in keeping soil healthy: their presence is used as a marker of good soil. They of also important food for birds and mammals, and it's a shame the word "worm" has been used in such a derogatory way.

For some reason children seem to be fascinated by them (my mother's diary for 1951 says: "Mary and Margaret are sitting in the back porch happily cutting up worms") and there is a children's song about eating worms…

Spiders too are feared by some – perhaps a passed-down folk memory of the days when we had poisonous ones here – but an important element of our fauna.

They control some insect populations and their webs have always fascinated human beings as a sign that seemingly basic creatures can weave something so complex and beautiful.

If you walk for a few minutes anywhere you will be in the presence of insects, though you may not always see them.

In recent years our insect populations have declined dramatically, and we have belatedly come to realise how important they are. Older people like me can remember the days when you came home in summer and your car windscreen was covered with squashed insects.

Recently a survey has shown that the number of insects "collected" by motorists has declined 80% in just 20 years. Some of this decline is due to habitat loss but some we have done deliberately with insecticides.

We are very selective about insects. We love butterflies – but not their caterpillars, – and bees – but not wasps and flies.

We like some beetles, like ladybirds, but not others, like cockroaches. Nobody wants to save the midge. Yet all these insects are part of our network of life.

Bats and some birds have declined because of the lack of insects like midges. Some plants don't get pollinated when insects disappear.

There is general understanding now that flying insects need nectar

A slow climb: A snail spotted on a post box.

Underestimated: Slugs are an important part of our ecosystem.

plants ("Bee and butterfly friendly mixes") but little recognition that their larvae also need other plants to eat, often those we see as weeds. The orange tips I see round at the moment take nectar from bluebells and lay their eggs on garlic mustard and lady's smock.

The interrelationship between flying insects and flowering plants is vital in our world's development: they evolved together.

Some very ancient flowering plants pre-existed flying insects. The best known is magnolia, not a native tree but common in gardens here. It is one of our most ancient flowering plants and is still pollinated by a specialist beetle rather than by flying insects.

Different insects are drawn to particular flower colours, so at certain times of year you'll see predominant colours of flowers to attract the insects.

Some butterflies look for different colours at different times: brimstones like yellows in spring, purples in autumn. Holly blues feed on holly in spring and ivy in autumn,

Insects don't just eat nectar and their larvae don't only eat plants.

Many insects are carnivorous in their larval stages, including dragonflies. And many adult insects suck blood of mammals, which can lead to them transmitting diseases.

So, while we see butterflies and dragonflies as beautiful creatures symbolising the freedom of flight and perhaps the fragility of beauty, we see many other insects and even the same insects' larvae as "pests", "grubs" and "creepy-crawlies."

We still allow the use of some very toxic pesticides in agriculture, such as neo-nicotinoides, even though we know we are losing our insects more every year.

When we move to vertebrates, we should be more consistent, but no . . . we depend more directly on them for our food and are more aware of them but have mixed feelings about them.

The main groups of vertebrates in the order they evolved are fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

Mating damselflies: Their larvae are carnivorous.

A little hitch-hiker: Lizard found on Kinver Edge.

This is also the order in which we tend to identify with them and like them.

Here in the Midlands we are not so aware of fish, but there are plenty of freshwater ones, and they are the only animal we freely catch as sport now without any apparent issues.

They are cold blooded, usually omnivorous and until recently not domesticated or farmed. Birds feed on them and mammals eat them too.

Here in Alvechurch we see kingfishers catching small freshwater fish and fish-eating otters beginning to thrive locally. Our fish population here is only partly natural as fish are also introduced for anglers.

Amphibians are also cold blooded and live partly on land and partly (especially for breeding) in water.

Our best-known ones are frogs, toads and newts. Frogs and toads are quite similar: frogs are smaller, have very variable colours and are well known to children because of their "frogspawn" or egg masses. Toads are bigger, knobblier and browner, laying strings of eggs.

They are both quite common round here and you may be lucky and see mass movements of them: young frogs moving from their spawning grounds or adult toads moving to theirs.

Two years running I've seen massed toads along the towpath here – in a damp evening they seem to like moving on asphalt surfaces and often across roads.

Newts are usually found in still

Frogs and Toads: Live on land or in water.

water and are not quite so common round here where we have fewer natural ponds. You can help them with a garden pond.

I'm afraid we used to catch them as kids and bring them home in jamjars. They usually escaped and rarely survived.

One species, the great crested newt, is a kind of poster-animal for nature conservation. It has become rare as it needs a big pond with lots of vegetation and insects, very few of which remain.

Funnily enough we like amphibians and they often appear in fairy tales and cartoons (the Frog Prince, Toad of Toad Hall etc.) dressed up like humans. We don't do this with newts though. We certainly don't like our main reptiles, snakes.

Reptiles lay eggs like amphibians but don't need water for it. We have three species of snake: adders, grass snakes and smooth snakes, though you're only likely to see grass snakes round here.

Adders, our only poisonous one, have disappeared from this locality during my lifetime. A bit like spiders, snakes stay in folk memory as being dangerous, and have often been killed.

The other British amphibians are lizards. You see them more on open moorland and cliffsides than in our wooded and grassy landscape, though you may see slow-worms which are legless lizards.

Birds evolved from flying reptiles,

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types of dinosaur. They still lay eggs but are warm-blooded and of course have feathers and wings.

They are perhaps the wild fauna you are most likely to see and hear around you and even recognise.

I'll leave the detail of them to my colleague the *Anonymous Birder* who I've been lucky enough to share walks with.

They interact with all other wildlife. Some eat seeds, nuts and other vegetation, some insects and other invertebrates, some small mammals, some fish, some carrion (dead animals). Their ability to fly means they can follow habitat as it changes, but their feeding needs makes them very dependent on the success of other species.

Generally speaking we like birds (though not if they get in the house) and see them as emblems of freedom, though some raptors have been and still are persecuted.

With mammals, we come to our nearest relatives. We give birth to live young (with a couple of exceptions which lay eggs), are warm blooded and have lungs.

Most live on land though some are aquatic (whales) some airborne (bats) and some use water at times (seals, otters, beavers). One characteristic of both birds and mammals is that we look after our young, sometimes for quite long periods.

Wild mammals are the least common fauna around you yet probably those you value seeing most.

Here you can see species of mice, rats, voles, moles, shrews, squirrels, weasels & stoats, foxes, badgers, bats, rabbits, hares, deer, hedgehogs, otters.

Most of these we value and find "cute", except rats of course, moles if you have a lawn and rabbits if you're a farmer. You're more likely to see domesticated mammals than any of them though. I'll deal with all of these and their place in our ecosystems in another issue.

■ **I wrote this poem (right) a few years ago about a meadow I visit every year. Go if you can!**

Clockwise from top left: Children enjoy pond-dipping for invertebrates. A heron looking out for fish. A banded demoiselle dragonfly.

Eades Meadow

This meadow has not been ploughed for centuries
Nor fertilised, except by cows, nor weedkilled
But every year the hay is harvested
And every winter the cattle take over.
I take some people round, like introducing
A favourite child, hoping they will love it.
They ask such questions. Has all this been planted?
Do they pull out the docks, nettles and brambles?
Are some of these weeds like in my garden?
I explain as best I can, how the meadow self-manages
With a bit of help from Adrian and his longhorns
How the hay-rattle eats the grass, leaving more room
For the orchids and moon daisies, how the dandelions
Come all in a flush in March and then disappear,
How the annual cut stops it becoming scrub.
Show them the shady parts under the trees
Where fewer flowers grow, the damper parts
With leaves of meadowsweet, full of aspirin,
The difference between hogweed, cow-parsley and pignut
Which someone, as always, remembers digging up
And eating as a child. What's cuckoo-spit? they say
And we watch two common blues locked in mating.
Hard to explain how a meadow comes to be.
Much of it underground, but every year
Four months of flower and bee and butterfly
Which even the most hard-hearted gardener
Can see is something special. Weed paradise.

The anonymous birder

How to enjoy village birdlife

A WOOING OR A WARNING?

THE peak of the May dawn chorus has passed and birdsong generally will gradually begin to wane in June as the majority of pairing and first broods will have taken place.

There is still plenty to listen out for, and it may be a good time to consider other forms of bird communication and what they mean.

We could divide most of the bird sounds we hear into two categories: "Song" and "Calls".

The sound we most connect with birds will be their song. Most of the song we hear will be the male bird of the species advertising their availability for a mate and sending a message to other males that this territory is taken so keep away.

There is a lot of information on the experience and health of the bird contained in the song that the females can decode.

Does that mean that only the males in all bird species sing? The short answer is *no* and the world of bird research is uncovering new information on bird communication.

For a long time it was thought that male birds did all the singing, but more recent research shows that in over two thirds of 1,400 songbirds surveyed so far around the world, females do sing complex songs too.

Duetting is another example of both genders singing to pair bond and share information. This is much more common in tropical birds, although we do have a bird species closer to home that duets with call and answer communication in tawny owls.

In the more northerly climes that we live in, however, the vast majority of birdsong for the purpose of breeding is male.

It seems that in migratory birds that come to the UK to breed then fly back to warmer locations in our winter, the female song has been largely lost as a method of pair bonding. We know this as female and male birds often have different plumages making study easier in these species.

Of course there are always exceptions and birds that don't move from country to country to breed, known as resident birds, are more likely to have a more equal vocal relationship.

Some of our most common birds fall into this category with robins, wrens and dunnocks sharing vocal communication on a number of tasks such as brood rearing and defending territories. In these species both genders have the same plumage which complicates study.

This brings us to the second category of birdtalk – calls. If you listen carefully to birdsound you will hear all sorts of noises too numerous and complex to describe.

These may be to raise an alarm regarding a predator's presence, bird or otherwise, or to make contact with a mate, family or colony member on any number of matters.

Listening to a small but incredibly noisy colony of starlings from the back garden reveals incessant chatter between the adult birds and offspring, then at a signal they all fly off together or break up into little sub groups.

What sounds and looks chaotic is obviously a clearly coordinated social group. Similarly, watching two magpies feed on the lawn, the adult quite clearly guiding the juvenile with an array of vocal prompts.

It is thought that social birds such as starlings or jackdaws share information regarding feeding grounds whilst roosting. There used to be the mildly negative term "birdbrain"... this may turn out to be more of a compliment as bird's brains make up for their small size by a greater concentration of connections or, with apologies to science, more tissue packed into a smaller space.

This enables them to employ a complex and subtle range of communication the full extent of which we can only guess at whilst dispelling some old preconceptions.

Talk is cheep: A wren sings from a branch. *Pcture by JL*

■ Many thanks to those who have taken part in birdwalks along the canal from Withybed Green this spring.

Among all the usual suspects heard or seen it was interesting to see numerous sand martins possibly breeding at Lower Bittell.

On the other side of the canal nearby was a pair of whitethroats (migratory birds) clearly in "wooing" mode and a reed bunting was also heard in the vicinity.

If you would like to develop your bird listening I would recommend the "Merlin" app, used by a participant on one of Mary Green's walks (also recommended) – it's free and a great introduction to the world of birdtalk.

JL

Village Gardening

How to spend your summer outdoors

Lindsay Stanton tells *The Village* some of the best places we should visit and explore in the nearby countryside this summer, and what jobs we should be focusing on in the garden this June.

AT last, here we are heading towards midsummer – it's been a long time coming!

Our seasons now seem predictably unpredictable and a desperately wet spring with strong winds from every direction has made time for gardening a bit of a premium.

Fortunately, many garden plants, especially those of oriental origin, have relished a mild, wet off-season which has led to a heartwarmingly extravagant display of spring blooms, particularly camellias, daphnes, azaleas and rhododendrons.

The multicoloured new growth of pieris and photinia for instance, has been exceptional this year.

BE WATER WISE

If you should find a persistently wet area in your garden, why not plant it with moisture-lovers and cease to worry.

A combination of a red-stemmed dogwood (cornus alba "Elegantissima"), with variegated leaves backing a trio of shuttlecock ferns and a grouping of astilbes of various heights and colours, from white through pinks to deep red, fronted by cream edged hostas, will offer an interesting display of stems, fern croziers plus feathery and leathery foliage.

Reduce lawn mowing to encourage deeper roots. If the grass goes brown, it will soon green up after rain!

Consider a number of ways to conserve water in the garden, such as recycling grey water from the kitchen sink and installing water butts wherever possible.

Planting in larger containers means the extra volume creates a greater reserve of moisture and nutrients for the plants. A gravel mulch on top will also help.

Planting appropriately for hot dry spots in the garden will reduce the need for watering. Lavender, nepeta, salvias, sedums, succulents and herbs will thrive there.

Croome Court: Lancelot 'Capability' Brown's first large scale commission, explore this property and land in Worcestershire.

MIDSUMMER WILDLIFE

Young amphibians will be leaving the pond so ensure there is a ramp to help them do so. Plenty of foliage and longer grass at the pond edges will give them shelter.

Keep birdbaths and bowls clean and topped up with fresh water.

Nicotiana "Fragrant Cloud" night scented stocks, sweet rocket (hesperis) and evening primrose will provide welcome sources of nourishment for night-flying moths and other pollinators.

ART INTO LANDSCAPE

Now the summer is in full swing, pleasant days encourage us to get out and about.

We are fortunate to have a selection of fine parks and gardens in our area.

One of the finest historical estates to visit is Croome Court, a National Trust property, near Pershore.

This was Lancelot "Capability" Brown's first and possibly finest large -scale commission (1751).

He worked on it for the Earl of Coventry off and on for 30 years and it became his showcase design.

It was said that his nickname "Capability " was coined early in his career when he said to Lord Coventry "….the place has its capabilities ".

Capability Brown is maybe the best - known and most prolific landscape architect of the 18th Century. His visionary approach made popular the newly fashionable English Landscape Movement and made it his own.

Inspired by the Grand Tours of Europe undertaken by rich landed gentry who were beguiled by the paintings of idyllic classical landscapes by Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin. They wanted their own versions at home and had the wealth to do so.

So the elaborate formal parterres, avenues and canals were swept away and replaced with vast parkland, serpentine rivers, lakes, temples, rides and "naturalistic" planting.

Brown approached this with a painterly eye, with sinuous shapes and planting of trees singularly and in copses.

Shelter-belts of woodland plus man-made lakes and diverted rivers opened up views and directed the eye to vistas and focal points.

Croome has all the hallmarks of this genre. The village was removed, the house and stables rebuilt in the towered Palladian style; a new church on a ridge now overlooks 1,000 acres of parkland towards the Malvern Hills.

A Pleasure Garden with lake, grotto and temples lies at the end of a "wilderness walk". Nearer the house is an attractive walled kitchen garden, and a Rotunda, offering views to a different vista.

TRADEMARK PLANTING

Brown used trees natural to the location as much as possible and developed a way of transporting mature trees to wherever he wanted them.

Above: Cosmos – a midsummer favourite. Right: Sphinx Bridge at Compton Verney

He also introduced Cedar of Lebanon trees to punctuate his landscapes.

Significant specimens still stand at his Compton Verney and Berrington Court (also National Trust) projects.

Compton Verney, between Stratford and Kineton, is a Brownian landscape on a smaller scale. The lakes with handsome stone bridges, and woodland backdrops are elegant in their simplicity.

Compton Verney literally has "art in the landscape" as the house is a leading Art Gallery with a permanent collection and hosts national exhibitions touring the country. It regularly puts on sculpture in the park.

Finally, Berrington Court in Herefordshire was the last of Brown's large-scale set piece commissions.

The house was built by his son-in-law Henry Holland and the park has all the hallmarks of a Brownian landscape, in which lies a 14-acre lake and enhanced views westward to Wales and the Black Mountains.

GARDEN CUTTINGS - JOBS FOR JUNE

- Deadhead perennials and repeat - flowering roses to extend their flowering period.
- Sow salad crops, herbs and biennial seeds in succession.
- Plant up hanging baskets.
- Plant out vegetables eg. cucumbers, courgettes , runner beans and tomatoes.
- Lift , divide and store spring - flowering bulbs.
- Organise someone to water your plants and pick produce while you are on holiday. Grouping pots together in trays of gravel in the shade will help.

Midsummer gardeners particularly enjoy a daily amble around their gardens with secateurs in hand to deadhead, pluck out the occasional weed and sample the fruit of sweet alpine strawberries as they go!

Village Gardening

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Once-in-a-lifetime sight

Amateur astronomer **Brian Watkiss** peers into the *Village* night sky.

The phases of the Moon (from left): Crescent, First Quarter, Gibbous. *Image courtesy of NASA.*

JUNE, and summer has arrived at last, either at the start of the month or at 9.50pm on the evening of the 20th depending on your opinion.

This is, of course, the Summer Solstice and for three weeks either side, we only get twilight, never true darkness because the Sun never gets further than 18 degrees below the horizon. You can see the brightest stars in the sky but only after 10.30pm which is getting a bit late.

Over in the sunset, Capella is lurking with Castor and Pollux to the left. Left a little further is Leo with Regulus shining brightly at his feet.

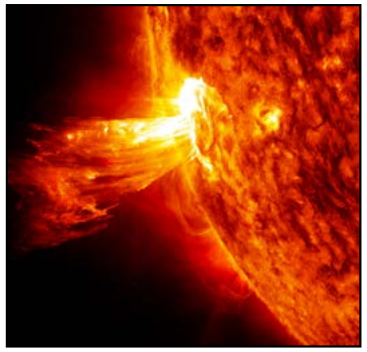
High above him is the Plough and if you "arc down" from the handle you come to Arcturus in Bootes and below that is Spica in Virgo. High in the east is Vega, the brightest star in our night sky.

One thing you are guaranteed to see though, is the Moon. This is a thin crescent in the early morning sky for the first few days of the month, with New Moon occurring on the 6th.

After this, it appears as a thin crescent below Castor on the 8th, thickening up and moving over to snuggle up to Regulus on the 11th.

As it trundles across the sky towards Spica, it reaches "First Quarter" on the 14th, when we can see half a Moon. What? Don't worry, I haven't gone completely bonkers (?), it just means it is one quarter of the way through its monthly (or 29.5 day) cycle.

It gets really close to Spica on the 16th, at which time it is said to be "gibbous". A wonderful word which means "bulging out", like the illuminated part of the Moon but I know of lots of things that could be said to be gibbous. Eventually, the whole of the side of the Moon that faces us is illuminated at Full Moon, on the 21st. At this time, we really notice how large the Moon looks when it's close to the horizon. This is known as the "Moon Illusion" and it is very noticeable. This will be especially true this month because the Moon is well below the ecliptic so only just creeps over the horizon even when at its highest.



An eruprtion: On the Sun's surface. *Image courtsey of NASA.*

On this date, it rises really late, just after 11 in the evening, so if you are the sort of ne'er-do-well that is out and about at that time, have a good look at this mysterious apparition, or indeed, a few days either side.

From now on, evenings are moonless but during the daytime the Sun and the Moon can both be seen.

A small star, the Sun is a ball of Hydrogen which is being turned into Helium through atomic fusion.

This releases massive amounts of energy which is what keeps us warm and gives us daylight. As the Sun rotates it stirs up its atmosphere and, much like the Earth's rotation, causes weather on its surface and the occasional "belching" of charged particles out into space.

Aurora Borealis: Spotted in Alvechurch. *Image/Carl McNally*

If one of these eructions is aimed at the Earth, we get showered with these particles which can affect satellites and even power lines and their equipment. It also produces the Aurora Borealis or "Northern Lights". Early in May, we had a particularly large shower so the aurora were seen at much lower latitudes than normal, including here in *The Village* area.

Fortunately, it takes between one and three days for these particles to arrive so they can be predicted. There are numerous websites that will give aurora alerts including our own Met Office. So, another website to keep an eye on as well as heavens-above.com.

EVENTS

BLACKWELL'S SUMMER FESTIVAL on 8 June is promising all the family fun of a traditional village fayre, finished off with a live band. The free event runs from 2–6pm and will feature a repeat of last year's popular games with a bouncy castle, beer and tea tents and a pizza van. Once the now traditional mass tug-o-war contest is finished, "The Reflections" will round off the event. Entry and all activities are free, and everyone is welcome to join the community at the school field, bring a gazebo, chairs and blankets.

THE MIDLAND SINFONIA will welcome celebrated guitarist CRAIG OGDEN on 29 June for a concert including Vivaldi's 'Concerto in D' and Boccherini's 'Fanfango'. LOVE AND ROMANCE' will be at St Laurence Church, Alvechurch at 7.30pm (doors & bar open at 7pm). Tickets: £15, £3 students & over 5s from The Lounge & Gin & Pickles Alvechurch also by BACS on www.midlandsinfonia.co.uk £17.50 & £3 on the door (cash or card) subject to availability. This concert is part of Bromsgrove Festival www.midlandsinfonia.co.uk

THE ASKLEPIOS ORCHESTRA conducted by Lee Armstrong, will give their Summer Concert on Sunday evening, 30th June 2024, (time tbc), in St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B458NR. "A night at the Opera", has a varied programme including: Holst - Ballet Music from 'The Perfect Fool', Tchaikovsky - Rose Adagio from 'The Sleeping Beauty', Puccini - Manon Lescaut Intermezzo, Delibes - Sylvia Suite, together with music by Wagner, Hérold, Wolf-Ferrari, Lysenko and Reinecke. Admission is free, and donations to the retiring collection are much appreciated. You are invited to come along to support the orchestra and bring friends. Save the Date of their Autumn Concert, which will be on 24th November 2024 in the same venue.

WOODSFEST, a family-fun music festival featuring fantastic tribute bands to QUEEN, ABBA and Rock, Reggae and Dance music will be held on 22 June. Amazing local food stalls, bouncy castles, face painting and drinks! Book now on Eventbrite. Bring some deck chairs and sun cream!

ALVECHURCH BAPTIST CHURCH will host their next lunch for carers past and present, those who are cared for either by family members or agencies, or perhaps, if you are just alone, on Wednesday 12 June ,12pm at The Baptist Church. There is no charge, donations welcome. If you would like to come on the 12th please ring or message either 0121 447 7369 or 0791710893 or e-mail dlshoesmith@yahoo.co.uk to book a place.

ALVECHURCH ARTISTS Jane Aston and Natasha Giles will be taking part in the North Worcestershire Artist Collective Exhibition at The Long Gallery at Hanbury Hall (National Trust) between 12 – 26 June from 10am – 4pm.

MUSIC

ALVECHURCH COMMUNITY CHOIR usually meets in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mondays at 7.30pm with occasional pub and outdoor sessions and a live stream. The choir is inclusive and open to everyone, whether you think you can sing or not. New members are always welcome. For more information or to join or book them, see their website www.alvechurchcommunitychoir.org.uk. They are in the Village Hall on 3, 17 and 24 June and in a pub on 10 June.

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL hosts live music, comedy, cinema and jazz nights. On Wednesday Jazz nights the bar opens at 7.45pm, with entertainment from 8.15pm. For Friday night events, the bar opens at 7pm with entertainment from 7.30pm, and on Saturdays the bar opens at 7.15pm with entertainment from 8pm. For more information and details, contact Paul on 07973 759340 or Richard 01527 66646. The programme is subject to change if the circumstances dictate.

BEL CANTO SINGERS, the well-known 4-part Worcestershire choir, rehearse at St. John's Church, Greenlands Avenue Redditch B98 7PZ on Monday evenings. They are always happy to welcome new singers. They have a very wide and varied repertoire and a huge catalogue to include pop, fun pieces, musical theatre, jazz, folk music and traditional choral and classical music along with much more. Bel Canto Singers are a friendly and social group, under the guidance of Musical Director, Liz Green and accompanist, Wendy Quirk. They are a non-profit making organisation and select a new charity each year to support both financially and with provision of their services. Just turn up at rehearsal on Mondays at 7.30pm where there will be a wide range of singing activities, light refreshments and chat. More information please contact Secretary Veronica Porter 07885 507899 or visit www.belcantosingers.org.uk

THE GEMINI Choir is seeking new singers. Info from Philip Morris on 07969 741137.

BLACKWELL Concert Band and Training Band is open to all brass and woodwind players of all

continues overleaf

WHAT'S ON GUIDE

REVIEW:

MURDER ON THE NILE

MY EXPECTATIONS were high as the curtains were slowly drawn to reveal the set of *Murder on the Nile*, *writes Keith Woolford.* **Having seen *The 39 Steps* last year, I expected to be taken on an exciting trips of twists and turns by Alvechurch Dramatic Society.**

And as director Jo Bestwick said, they took full "advantage of the array of home-grown talent". It's a whodunnit? on board an Egyptian boat called the *Lotus*, loosely based on the *SS Sudan* which Agatha Christie and husband had a trip on in 1933 and inspired the story.

The play differs somewhat from her book *Death on the Nile*, particularly the absence of Poirot and with some of the characters becoming an amalgam.

The first thing that impresses is that it's a wordy play and I didn't catch any prompting from the wings – always a good sign of standards.

The audience is introduced to each new character as they board, and a picture forms as you start to formulate who to keep an eye on.

I saw it twice and still believe the butler did it (or even the steward). Stalwart Chris Davies held the play together as Canon Pennefather. He directed traffic and sussed how the murder was committed and by whom. The always reliable Leah Yendell added panache to her complexed and conflicted Jacqueline de Severac. All the thespians deserved their applause.

The on-stage performers are the tip on an iceberg, as there are many more in front and behind the drapes imperative for such a production. An entirely enjoyable evening put on by members of the award-winning Alvechurch Dramatic Society, recently awarded the NODA West Midlands Best Drama 2023 for *When We Are Married*.

abilities. To learn more about the band, book them, or find details of upcoming events, email blackwellconcertband98@gmail.com or visit www.blackwellconcertband.co.uk

SINGING For Health is a group aimed specifically at people with health problems, mental or physical. They meet on Thursdays 2-3pm at St Chad's Church, Rubery (£3 per session). Everyone is welcome!

BROMSGROVE Music Centre runs FREE weekly string orchestra, concert band and beginner group Lift Off! sessions for young musicians. New members always welcome! Sessions are run by Severn Arts at The Orchards School, Bromsgrove, on Mondays 5.45–6.45pm Individual instrumental lessons are also provided at the centre. For info, see www.severnarts.org.uk/music-centre-groups

BROMSGROVE Folk Club meets on the second and last Thurs every month at Catshill Club, starting at 8pm. For a full list of events call Bob Bignell on 0121 476 5938 or see www.bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Rock Choir offers everyone the chance to sing pop, rock and chart songs – no audition needed. Free taster sessions available. More info at www.rockchoir.com or on 01252 714276.

BROMSGROVE Community Choir meets on Thurs evenings, 6–7pm at Bromsgrove Methodist Church (main church hall). They sing for fun and enjoyment; everyone welcome, singers or not. Contact Ruth Henley for details on 01527 527022 or 07812 145267, or r.g.henley@btinternet.com

BARNT GREEN CHORAL SOCIETY meets in the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, on Mondays from 7.45 - 9.45pm. The choir sings a range of music throughout the year, performing at least three concerts. New singers are always welcome and there is no need to audition! For more information, see barntgreenchoralsociety.org or facebook.com/barntgreenchoralsociety.

DANCING

JAZZ HEELS CLASS FOR ADULTS. A new class held on Tuesdays 5:45-6:30pm at Hopwood Village Hall. For more info contact Amy on 07979408997.

TANGO ARGENTINO at Barnt Green Quakers/ Friends Meeting House on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings. For further information: www.facebook.com/groups/tango42/announcements (no Facebook account needed).

AELFGYTHE Border Morris is seeking new dancers (female) and musicians (male or female) to join them for fun, exercise and dancing. They meet at 7.45pm every Weds in Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall. Everyone welcome. Come and play traditional folk music, or try Morris dancing. For more details call Pam on 07961 830 831.

FRENCH & Breton folk dancing meets at Alvechurch Village Hall on the first Sat each month from 2.30–5pm (Please check first by emailing alvechurchfrenchdance@gmail.com). Informal tuition and live music provided. New dancers (and musicians) welcome. £2 per session.

SEQUENCE Ballroom and Latin dancing every Mon evening at 8pm at the Longbridge Social Club, 1012 Bristol Road South, Northfield. Occasional free tuition. All welcome to a friendly fun-filled dance. Details from Kalvin on 07725 265024.

ALVECHURCH Morris Men are on the lookout for new dancers and musicians. They practise on Mondays at Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall, 8.30–10pm, followed by a "debrief" at a local hostelry. They dance in local towns and at various local and national events, and perform a world-famous (sort of) mummers play in the village every New Year's Day.
No ability, fitness or co-ordination required – if you are male, 18+ and prepared to spend more time than is probably good for you in public houses, pop along to meet the group!
Drop in to any practice, contact Steve on 07375 592928 or email: alvechurchbagman@gmail.com

NANCY Butterfly Morris Dancers dance in the North-West Morris style (clogs!) and practise at Catshill Methodist Church Hall on Monday evenings ready to meet up with other Morris sides for social events and festivals. They are very happy to welcome new adult dancers and musicians. See: www.nancybutterfly.co.uk or Facebook for what they get up to. You can contact them via the website or Jane on 07726 915289.

AVONCROFT Folk Dance Group enjoys anything from barn dances to ones seen in *Pride & Prejudice* or *Poldark*. All welcome, no need to have a partner. The group meets every Thurs from 8–10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. £2.50 incl refreshments. Info from Liz Stanton on 01905 353995 or liz@the-stantons.uk or visit www.avoncroftfdg.weebly.com

BJ's BUSY Boots Line Dancing Classes: Tues 2–3pm Bromsgrove Leisure Centre; 7–10pm Stoke Prior Sports/Country Club. Thurs 1.15–3.30pm Bromsgrove Methodist Church Centre. Social Dance usually 1st Sat in month at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane. It's a fun way to exercise. For more details phone Brenda on 01527 870151.

AMY GREAVES SCHOOL OF DANCE & Fitness offers a variety of classes for toddler up to adults. Based in Hopwood, Bournville and Longbridge. Contact 07979408997 amygreaves1@hotmail.co.uk www.amygreavesschoolofdance.com

SEQUENCE dancing every Tuesday evening at 8pm at Fairfield Village Hall, Bromsgrove. Welcoming and friendly atmosphere, all levels welcome. For further details please contact Joyce & Len on 0121 682 3266.

DANCE AND FITNESS at Bournheath Village Hall including Adult Zumba, Pilates and Stretch classes as well as KS1 and Baby Ballet. For more information message 'Dance With Nikki' on social media or n.foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

LINEDANCE CLASS, every Thursday between 6pm - 7pm at Extracare Longbridge Village.Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

BEGINNERS LINEDANCE class, Tuesdays 6pm - 7pm at West Heath Community Centre, Hamstead House, B31 3QY. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

NEW SALSA dance classes, every Thursday at the Alvechurch Inn, B48 7LD. Doors open at 6pm. Beginners classes at 7pm, with the main class at 8pm. All classes are £9 each or both classes for £15. Come on your own or with friends. Contact 07779686679.

BALLROOM/LATIN SEQUENCE dance some line dance held on the first Friday of the month (check just in case Friday has to change because of commitments in the village) from 8pm -10.30pm at Extracare Longbridge Village, B31 2FZ. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

CLUBS, GROUPS & SOCIETIES

ST GODWALD'S Community Cafe meets every other Fri from 10am–noon at St Godwald's Room adjacent to the Church Hall, Finstall Road, Bromsgrove. Friendship, cake, tea/coffee. Donations welcome—monies to St Basil's charity for homeless youngsters. More info: davidrowe876@btinternet.com

BROMSGROVE Men In Sheds is a group for anyone (male or female) who has retired or been made redundant and wants to spend time with like-minded people. The group meets Mon–Thurs, 10am–2pm at Unit 1, Metals & Ores Industrial Estate, Stoke Prior B60 4JZ. You can find more information by calling 01527 570490 or email enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk

BARNT GREEN QUAKERS invite you to their film screenings. Admission is free however donations are welcome. Full details can be found at The Meeting House, 6 Sandhills Rd, Barnt Green. The next film will be on 15 June; a Pacific Northwest Ballet, choreographed by George Balanchine. Shakespeare's comedy of magic and love's delusions is set to the music of Felix Mendelssohn. Upcoming events include Pressed leaves & Beeswax Art Exhibition on 1 June, 10am – 4pm/ 2nd June, 2pm – 4pm which will be introduced to us by international award-winning nature artist, Hui-Ying Chang from Taiwan.

PLACES OF WELCOME is a growing network of local community groups who provide their neighbourhoods with places where all people can feel safe and where they can connect, belong and contribute. The network is open in St Laurence Church and The Ark on Wednesdays 10.30am-12pm, all are open to everyone and offer friendship and hospitality, free refreshments and local knowledge about the neighbourhood. Visit www.placesofwelcome.org.uk or email info@placesofwelcome.org.uk

REDDITCH Military History Society usually meets monthly in St Luke's Church Hall (Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 4JX), 7 for 7.30pm. Info from Ron on 01527 545450 or ronnieg33b@hotmail.co.uk

FRIENDS Of Bittell Reservoirs is a group of local people interested in preserving the natural environment of the Site of Special Scientific Interest at Upper Bittell, Lower Bittell and Mill Shrub reservoirs, which are important staging posts for migrant birds and wildlife. If you have an interest in preserving this unique environment and would like to help in its preservation and maintenance, contact paul_and_carrol@live.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY runs a regular programme of social events and guided walks, as well as maintaining local footpaths. Talks and social events are held in the Village Hall, unless otherwise noted. Entry at talks and AGM is free for members and £1 for guests, including a drink and biscuits. Litter picks start at 10am. Other social events are by ticket and details of venue, start time and price will be published by the organisers nearer the time. The end-of-season event; "A night at the races" will be held between 7-10pm on Saturday 15th June (not 19th as printed in the programme). This is a ticketed event: details about ticket purchase will be released soon. They then take a summer break and restart their programme of events on September 18th.

REDDITCH Community Shed is a project that encourages skills, combats loneliness, and provides a sense of worth in people who are retired or otherwise wondering what to do with themselves. They have a small woodworking work shop in the Kingfisher Centre just outside Primark and they are open Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Call in for tea and biscuits and a look round. More details at www.RedditchCommunityShed.co.uk or on FaceBook. If you're in Redditch of a Tuesday or Thursday they would be pleased to see you.

THE MONDAY Fellowship group meets at the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church in Barnt Green at 2.30pm on the second Monday every month; £2 to include tea and biscuits and an interesting talk. Info: Maureen Frowley on 0121 445 0880.

INNER WHEEL Club of Redditch welcomes you to its monthly meetings on 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Southcrest Hotel Redditch. An international Women's Organisation, they enjoy a bit of everything; walks, talks, days & evenings out, and everything in between whilst at the same time helping the community. Contact Anne Robertson for information 07580351361. Or email redditch.innerwheel@gmail.com or visit www.innerwheel.co.uk

BROMSGROVE U3A: No longer in full time work? Activity/interest groups and speaker meetings are happening throughout the month. Check website for more: www.u3asites.org.uk/bromsgrove/home

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Welcomes Refugees is a group of volunteers providing a range of support - from friendship and practical help - for all refugees and asylum seekers moving into the district. BRWR is open to all, irrespective of political or religious beliefs, and new volunteers are always needed. More info at brwr.uk

CATSHILL Carers and Bereavement Back Up Group specifically offers respite, socialising and occasional speakers to carers and bereaved in the area. It meets on the last Tues each month in the coffee bar area of Catshill Methodist Church Centre in Golden Cross Lane from 2.30pm for about 1.5hrs. All carers and bereaved welcome, as well as those who used to care for someone who has passed away or is now in a care facility. Tea and biscuits/ cake provided – no charge. Contact Di (0121 445 3595) for details and encouragement.

BROMSGROVE Speakers Club meets at The Bell at Belbroughton every other Tues, 7.45–10pm. Everyone who wants to gain confidence in public speaking is welcome, book in advance www.bromsgrovespeakers.org.uk.

RE-ENGAGE aims to help isolated elderly people by offering monthly tea parties where they can reconnect or make new friends in their own community. If you know of an elderly person who could benefit, please get in touch on 07539 276054. Guests need to be aged over 75 and living alone, and must be mobile enough to walk to a driver's car with assistance. Find info at www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk or on Facebook @ ContacttheElderlyRedditch

AGE UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a free Dementia Café at Finstall Village hall. It is a free social hub aimed at people with dementia, their families, and carers in Bromsgrove and the surrounding areas. It takes place every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 10.30am-12.30pm.

BROMSGROVE Photographic Society is a friendly, active and mutually supportive club for those keen to learn about, or improve, their photographic and digital imaging skills. The growing membership has skills ranging from novice to highly skilled, within wide-ranging subjects. The club meets on Tues nights, 8-10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. For more info, visit www.bromsgroveps.com or see Facebook and Twitter.

ROTARY Club of Bromsgrove meets every 2nd Tues of the month at Maekong Thai Restaurant, and every 4th Tues at Bromsgrove School, both 7pm for 7.30pm. For more info www.bromsgroverotary.org.uk or contact Ron Pearce on 07703 567982.

HEART Of England Speakers is a friendly public speaking club, based in Solihull. It is affiliated to Toastmasters International, and meets on the 1st and 3rd Tues of each month, 7.30—9.30pm, at the Silhillians Sports Club and Events Centre. If you would like to boost your confidence get in touch via www.heartspeakers.org.uk, Instagram @toastmastersheartofengland, or via LinkedIn.

REDDITCH Rotary Club meets Monday lunchtimes at the Abbey Hotel, Hither Green Lane, Redditch, B98 9BE. You would be very welcome to join in. Want to be involved, hear interesting speakers, and serve your community? Want to know more? Contact Peter Williams on 01527 60277.

LICKEY PHAB Club is a social club where people aged 14 and over, with and without disabilities, can come together each week to have fun! It is affiliated to national charity Phab. The club meets every Mon from 7.30–9.30pm at The Trinity Centre, Lickey Parish Hall to have fun, play games, do crafts or just chat – there's also a tuck shop! More info from Louise Boother on 07814 122990 or lickeyphabclub@hotmail.com

BEACON Ladies Club meets at 8pm on alternate Weds evenings at The Hawthorns Social Club, Rednal Hill Lane, Rednal. There is a varied programme of speakers and outings, including occasional visits to the theatre. New members of all ages welcome. £12 annual membership, plus £2 fortnightly. Call Barbara on 0121 445 3456 or Anita on 445 3770.

BARNT GREEN FRIENDSHIP CLUB meets every 2nd Tues of the month at 2.15pm at Burcot Grange. Visitors £3 to include tea and biscuits. Members 50p. Ladies and gents both welcome. For more details call Rosalind on 0121 445 0598.

THE WORCESTER-BIRMINGHAM & DROITWICH CANALS SOCIETY holds regular monthly meetings in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge Pub, Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.45pm. There is usually a guest speaker. They promote the upkeep of the canals to ensure that the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy and are a registered charity. Find out more: www.wbdcs.org.uk or Facebook @wbdcs.org.uk. or email contact@wbdcs.org.uk. Non-members are welcome. Free entry.

ALVECHURCH WEDNESDAY CLUB meets on 8th May at Alvechurch Cricket Club at 1.30pm. Their next meeting is on 12 June and the speaker is Marion Plumb. Her talk is entitled "Open a Kimono" and it will open up the world of these wonderful Japanese traditional garments. She is bringing some examples of kimonos, so it is sure to be a very enjoyable afternoon learning about and viewing the beautiful garments. They will also enjoy cups of tea and coffee with a biscuit or two and a good catch up with friends old and new! Come along and join in at the Alvechurch Cricket Club at 1.30pm and see for yourself More information from Janet on 447 7870 or Lis on 445 3895.
Please note that their July meeting is a week earlier than usual on the first Wednesday of the month, the 3rd July at 1.30pm. The speaker will be Paul Betterton who will be telling them all about tracing family histories! This will be particularly interesting for those who have dabbled with finding out more about their ancestries and possibly not got very far and given up! Hopefully Paul will put everyone on the right path to delve further back into the past.
As usual there will be a raffle, tea or coffee with biscuits and chance to catch up with each other

continues overleaf

before the summer break. There will be no August meeting this year, so the next meeting will be on 11 September so have a wonderful summer with, hopefully, lots of sunshine to enjoy. More information from Lis on 445 3895 or Janet on 447 7870

COFFEE, Cake and Chat is a place to meet new friends or catch up with old friends (includes a dedicated baby area) on the 4th Friday of each month 10:30am - 12pm at The Wheel, Blackwell. No charge, donations welcome. More info on 0121 445 1425.

LICKEY Hills Local History Society meets monthly at 7.30pm in the Trinity Centre, Old Birmingham Road, Lickey B45 8ES. Annual subscription £15. Non-members £3 per meeting. Please email: info@lhlhs.org.uk or visit: www.lhlhs.org.uk

BROMSGROVE (1982) PROBUS Club provides opportunities for retired and semi retired men to meet socially. A members meeting is held at Avoncroft Arts Centre on the 3rd Wednesday monthly 10am until 12pm, including refreshments and a talk by a guest speaker. Other regular activities include monthly walks, lunches including partners, snooker--, social outings and IT. For more info visit www.bromsgrove1982probus.weebly.com or contact Martin on 07717 150136.

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Soroptimists meets every 2nd Thurs of the month at Burcot Village Hall. New members welcome – pop to a meeting, email sibrsoroptimist@gmail.com or ring 07812 985927.

ALVECHURCH Historical Society has a planned programme of talks on the first Monday of the month at 7.45pm at The Ark, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch. More details from Anne Humphries on 0121 445 5955.

KINGFISHER PROBUS Club of Redditch is recruiting retired and semi-retired men to join them in a friendly environment. They meet every 2nd Thurs of the month at 11.30am at the Court Leet,174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove B61 7AY, with a short meeting at noon then lunch followed by an interesting talk given by a visiting speaker. Partners/friends welcome to join for walks, trips, golf, skittles and special lunches. Contact Chris Bailey on 01527 835802 for confirmation of date and venue. More info at www.kingfisherprobusredditch.co.uk

BROMSGROVE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at Bromsgrove Rugby Club. Doors open 7.30pm, speakers begin 7.45pm. Admission free on your first visit; refreshments available. Observing meetings are also held on the first Monday each month – bring your telescopes. More info via www.broms-astro.org.uk, www.facebook.com/bromsastro or emailing info@broms-astro.org.uk

ROTARY CLUB of Lickey Hills meets on Monday evenings, 7.15 for 7.30pm, at Hillscourt Conference Centre (NASUWT headquarters) on Rose Hill (B45 8RS). For details contact Graham Wiseman on 0121 460 1402.

SILVER THREADS, the Alvechurch club, meets on the first Weds each month at 2pm in Alvechurch Village Hall. You'll be sure of a welcome in this friendly atmosphere, where members can chat over a cup of tea. There are regular bingo sessions, and occasional days out. New members welcome. More info from Pat on 0121 447 8630.

WOODRUSH RUGBY Club "Old Dogs" meet at 8pm on the 2nd Thurs in the month at the Clubhouse, Icknield Street, 01564 822878. Open to all former players, social members and old friends for a social chat and reminisce over a glass of beer. Join us: call Mike Betts on 07960 303254 or visit www.woodrushrfc.co.uk or info@woodrushrfc.co.uk

The North Worcestershire Association of the NATIONAL TRUST hold monthly meetings with interesting speakers on 3rd Thursday 7.30pm at Tardebigge Community Hall, also walks, outings and an annual holiday. For further info email Ros257@yahoo.co.uk

Bromsgrove & District AMATEUR RADIO CLUB meets every Friday evening from 7.30pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. The club is open to anyone with an interest in Amateur Radio. More details from the secretary Alan on 07886 000052 or secretary@bromsgroveradioclub.co.uk

COMMUNITY COFFEE morning - open to all. Free refreshments and chat. Wednesdays 10-12 at Barnt Green Baptist Church. Enquiries can be made to: events@bgb.org.uk

THE MACULAR Society Barnt Green Support Group meets on the last Fri of the month (with some exceptions) at The Parish Centre, behind St Andrew's Church, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, B45 8NR, 2–4pm. Friendly, self-help group, proving there is more to life than this devastating eye condition. New members always welcome. For more info, ring Wendy on 0121 445 1585 or Alan on 01527 877864.

Are you feeling misunderstood but you're unsure why? You're not alone. Find guidance, understanding and support in an inclusive community. Join the "ALVECHURCH INCLUSIVE NETWORK" group on Facebook!

SPORT, FITNESS & HEALTH

BARNT GREEN WATERS LIMITED are hosting a Club Open Day at Upper Bittell on Saturday 11th May 11am to 4pm for those who may be interested in becoming members of the either the Fishing Club or Sailing Club, or to enjoy the natural surroundings of the estate. Full details about the Open Day can be seen on pages 28-29.

UPTON WARREN SAILING CLUB sails throughout the year at Aztec (Upton Warren) opposite Webb's Garden Centre, Wychbold. A small, friendly club with both mixed fleet racing and cruising sessions. Most members sail their own boats but there are also club boats available for members to use. See www.uwsc.co.uk to find out more or contact membership@uwsc.co.uk

JOOLISM HIIT CLASSES. Semi-PT resistance training for ladies only in a well-equipped gym in Bromsgrove. For ladies who want toned and strong bodies. Attendance must be pre-booked via julie@joolismfitness.co.uk

WOODRUSH RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB, Icknield Street, Alvechurch, B38 0EL is recruiting: Senior (Men & Ladies) U17 Colts Mini/Junior & Micros. Call 07341 256821 for recruitment or 01564 822878 (Clubhouse) email info@woodushrfc.co.uk or see: www.drushrfc.co.uk Facebook @WoodrushRFC

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY'S WALKS are held at 2pm of the first Sunday of the month unless noted otherwise. For walks starting outside the village, please contact the walk leader if you need a lift. Occasionally, weather conditions mean that a walk must be cancelled at late notice: check with the leaders or the AVS website if unsure. Always wear appropriate footwear. Contact walks organiser Tony Brannon for more information about the walks: avswalks@gmail.com. The end-of-season evening walk will be held on 5 July at 6.30pm, led by Tony Brannon 07763 468893. Meet at Alvechurch Station by the bike racks, B48 7SD. Finish at The Weighbridge for a drink and natter. They then take a break and restart walks in September; details to follow.

BARNT GREEN FISHING CLUB controls the fishing (both game and coarse) on the Bittell Reservoirs. Contact: barntgreenfishingclub@gmail.com or Facebook @Barnt Green Fishing Club.

REDDITCH & Bromsgrove Company of Archers meet April–Sept, Mon 6.30pm and Fri 6.30pm at Meadow Park Football Ground (by Harris Brush Works – outdoors) and Oct–March on Fri 6.30pm at Studley Leisure Centre (indoors). Really friendly no-pressure club. New members always welcome (juniors from 8 years old, seniors from 18 to 80+, seasoned archers or absolute beginners). Beginners' courses run throughout the year or taster sessions by appointment. Further info from rbcoaCoach@gmail.com, rbcoasecretary@gmail.com, or www.redditcharchers.org

REDDITCH Ramblers is a growing, friendly and sociable group offering a full walks programme including walks every Sat and Sun and a midweek walk most weeks. Sun walk is usually 6–9 miles; the Sat walk is more challenging, usually 10–12 miles. Midweek walks vary, sometimes morning walks followed by option of lunch or full day walking. The Saturday Strollers walk fortnightly (4–5 miles). Newcomers are always welcome and can walk three times with the group before deciding if they want to join. The group also arranges holidays, coach trips and social events throughout the year. Full info at redditch.ramblers@gmail.com or www.redditchramblers.org.uk

PHYSIOTHERAPY-LED Pilates Classes in Cofton Hackett, Barnt Green and Lickey Hills. Mixed ability Daytime and Evening classes available. Mother & Baby classes also run by Women's Health Physiotherapists. Small and welcoming classes aimed to improve balance, muscle tone and posture as well as overall body strength. Contact Elizabeth on 07850 604425 or elizabethalexanderltd@gmail.com or see www.elizabethalexanderphysiotherapy.com

CLUBBERCISE@ Alvechurch: Get sweat and glow! Get ready for exercise in disguise. You'll be dancing yourself happy and sweating until you sparkle, without even realising it. Mondays 7.30–8.30pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

POUND FITNESS@ Alvechurch: Channel your inner rockstar with this full body cardio-jam session. Using Ripstix®, lightly-weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Weds 7.30–8.15pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

MEDITATION CLASSES for Everyone. Come and try a KIND approach to Meditation and experience for yourself the revitalising power of a relaxed, calm, clear mind, whether beginner or experienced practitioner. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, online or a mixture. REDUCE STRESS, FEEL CALMER, SLEEP BETTER. To join us for a trail contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F Sally My Yoga Mind

BARNT GREEN Sailing Club offers regular sailing, either racing or casual sailing, in beautiful surroundings at Upper Bittell reservoir. For info contact secretary@bgsc.uk or see www.sailing-barntgreen.com

BRIAR Rose Field Archers is a field archery club based near Bromsgrove. There are two qualified coaches for those interested in taking up the sport. For information contact briarrosefieldarchers@gmail.com

YOGA Really Works: classes on Thurs evenings (term-time only), 7–8pm at Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House, Watford Road. Six-week blocks £45. Slow and mindful rhythmic movement in time with the breath. Accessible venue—classes open to wheelchair uses and less abled persons. Contact George on 07490 781637 or yogareallyworks@outlook.com, see www.yogareallyworks.co.uk or on Facebook @Yogareallyworks

THE RAMBLERS Bromsgrove Group: Guided walking with our group for pleasure, fitness and fun. Full programme of walks / events throughout the year. More info at www.bromsgroveramblers.webs.com or call Martin on 01527 857117 or Peter on 01527 558203.

ALVECHURCH WALKING Buddies: join a regular local walk with like-minded people who simply want to go on a local, sedate and friendly walk with no pressure. Well-behaved owners and their dogs are very welcome. The group meets at 10.30am every Thurs. For more info, search for 'alvwb' on Facebook or contact Tony on 07763 468893.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL run a series of weekly health walks around Bromsgrove and its districts. The walks are usually steady in pace and led by qualified walk leaders, and free to attend. Walks are often followed by guided sessions on the park gym equipment. Blackwell Gentle Walk, Wednesdays, 10.30am, start opposite the entrance to St. Catherine's Church. Lickey End Walking for Health, Tuesdays, 10am, meet at Lickey End Recreation Ground car park. Oakalls and Harwood Park Health Walk, Wednesdays, 2pm, meet at The Oakalls Play Area. Sanders Park Walk, Mondays, 9.50am for 10am start, meet at the café kiosk near the car park. There are three options: Short (30mins), Medium (2-3miles in 60-75mins), and Fast (3+ miles in 60mins). Bromsgrove Rural Walk, Fridays, 9.45am for 10am departure, meet in the Sanders Park car park extension. These rural walks vary between 4 and 7 miles and can involve driving, a system of car sharing has been established. Stoke Heath Health Walks, Thursdays, 10.30am, meet at Stoke Heath Recreation Ground.

SOCIAL TENNIS takes place at Rubery Community & Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, Rubery B45 9AD on Mondays from 1–3pm. The group would welcome a few more players – just turn up or ring Don on 01527 759 318.

SARACEN Cycling Club is seeking new members. Men, ladies, beginners, and regular riders are all welcome. The long-established club meets regularly by the Tardebigge Pub on Thurs at 10am and Sun at 9.45am. See www.saracenroadclub.com or call Ivor on 0121 453 2287.

LONGBRIDGE Cycling Club meets weekly on Tues and either Sat or Sun. Ride pace generally at 9-11mph overall average, varied distances. Hotel and hostel weekends away, cycle camping adventures, social outings and much more. All ages, beginners, and seasoned cyclists all welcome. Call or text Deb on 07738 982161, email debweston@aol.com or see www.longbridgecyclingclub.com or Facebook @longbridgecyclingclub

MERCIAN NORDIC WALKING: come and try a taster session for fun, fitness and friendship. More info at www.merciannordicwalking.co.uk Online fitness and personal training available at www.mercianfitness.co.uk

PILATES PILATES with Steff Affleck (Rowney Green) Mat classes, apparatus (reformer/ tower / barrels etc.) 1:1 and duets. Irrespective of age, gender, health or fitness we could all benefit from understanding more about how to keep moving well. Joseph Pilates' system of exercise, using apparatus he invented, enables you to challenge what is strong, build what is weaker, exploring how you can balance the body to move away from pain and discomfort towards greater resilience and independence. Graduate of Pilates Professional Advanced Teacher Training; teaching Pilates for 17 years. Call 07759590830 or see www.steffaffleck.co.uk

BARNT Green Sports Club (Margesson Drive, Barnt Green, B45 8LR) offers racquet sports in a friendly environment, plus running and cycling groups. Clubhouse with licensed bar. More info from Nick Butcher on 0121 445 1978 or visit www.barntgreensportsclub.co.uk

CATSHILL FC offers youth coaching sessions each Saturday morning at Catshill Middle School, Meadow Road, Catshill, B61 0JW. Boys and girls from Reception age upwards are welcome. Contact Gary on 07462 118920 or see www.catshillfc.co.uk for further info.

BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH Badminton Club welcomes players for social and league play. Playing Sunday evenings 5.40 to 7.40pm. Details from Steve Whittaker 07805 051456.

PILATES with Lottie Newberry: Physiotherapy-led Pilates classes every Monday in Alvechurch in the day and Barnt Green in the evening. Contact Lottie on lottienewberrypilates@hotmail.com. All abilities welcome.

ACTIVE SENIORS Exercise Classes at Alvechurch Village Hall, run by Bromsgrove council on Fridays starting 9.15am, £5 per class. Contact g.peart@hotmail.co.uk or call on 07828 515344 for more information.

YOGA for Every-Body. Come and try a fresh approach to Yoga, that works with your body rather than against it. A slow-paced, yet powerful Yoga for EveryBody, whether beginner or experienced, flexible or wishing you were. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, Blackwell First School, online or a mixture. MOVE BETTER, BE CALMER, FEEL GREAT! To trial a class, contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F: Sally My Yoga Mind

TAI CHI (Qigong) sessions in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mon 10–11am and Friday 10.30. Qigong is an integration of physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intentions. More details Nige on 07966069956 or nige@mindfulmoves.co.uk

FIVE WAYS Old Edwardians' Cricket Club at Ash Lane, Hopwood: Junior, Men's and Women's teams, come and join in! Open to all. Excellent facilities. Everyone welcome. Coaching for juniors on Fri evenings May to Aug. Contact Mark Tovey on 01527 835031.

NEW Ravens (North East Worcestershire Ravens Rugby League Club) based at Forshaw Heath Lane, Portway, B94 5LH. Junior training and 'little leaguers' take place on Sun mornings from 10.30am, with open-age and touch on Weds evenings from 7pm. All welcome at this family-orientated club. Contact Gail on 07515 020844 or Jason on 07957 248464 visit www.newravens.net

KINGS Norton Rhinos offers contact and non-contact rugby for children from Reception to Year 12. A safe and friendly introduction to rugby – and plenty of outdoor fun and exercise! Training takes place at KNRFC Ash Lane, Hopwood, on Sundays from 9.30–11.30am. Contact Simon Thompson on 07968 424585 or visit www.knrfc.co.uk

HOPWOOD Ladies Cycling Club meets at Hopwood Playing Field on Tuesdays at 11.30am and Wednesdays at 9.30am. For information, visit www.hopwoodladiescyclingclub.co.uk or phone Sheila Evans on 07779 530017.

MARTIAL ARTS Kickboxing/Karate at The Ark Tuesdays 6.30-7.30. For more information please visit www.forcecombatmartialarts.co.uk

SLIMMING WORLD at Cofton Village Hall, on Wednesdays 9:30am, 5:30pm and 7:30pm.

ASSERTIVENESS AND HELPING SKILLS DONINGTON TRAINING at Alvechurch Village Hall. Easy, enjoyable and effective learning. Wednesdays, pay what you think and can afford, any profits go to The Village Hall. http://tinyurl.com/DTcdates or John Talbut (0121) 445 4607.

6 WEEK MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS COURSES to help you relax, find inner peace, and elevate your life. Join them on Wednesday evenings at The Friends Meeting House in Barnt Green or online whenever it suits you. Suitable for everyone! Enrol in the upcoming courses and discover how they've been changing lives at www.MeditationWithCoz.com or contact Coz at 07770067349. Follow on Facebook/Instagram: @MeditationWithCoz.

BARNT GREEN CHUGGERS & CHAINGANG provide run & cycling sessions for mixed abilities, those wanting to stay in shape plus those wishing to improve their running, cycling & fitness all in a social & recreational environment. Club Sessions - Chuggers (run) Monday & Wednesday 7pm and Chaingang (cycling) Wednesday 7pm & Saturday 9am all from Barnt Green Sports Club. For more info or to arrange a trial session please contact kategallimore@googlemail.com

GENTLE EXERCISE CLASSES working on mobility, strength, flexibility and balance. Classes are very welcoming and inclusive and are held on: Wednesday's 1.30-2.30 at St Stephens Church Hall, Rednal and Thursdays 10am-11am Blackwell Community Hall, Blackwell. The cost is £5 per class. For more information call Lorraine 07866877881

LEGS, BUMS AND TUMS every Thursday morning at The Parish Centre at 9.15am at £6 per class. All abilities welcome. Contact Natasha on 07828890774 or natasha.atkinson5@sky.com for more information.

A local man recently took part in a national walking football tournament for sufferers of Parkinson's Disease held at England's training centre, St George's Park.

Mike Bingham of Alvechurch is a member of Movers and Shakers FC, who meet twice a week throughout the year at modern all weather facilities in Worcester and Redditch.

"I was diagnosed with Parkinson's two years ago and found walking football is a great way to counter its effects. We are a totally inclusive club that has around 20 members who meet to exercise, socialise and have fun. There were nearly 200 participants at St George's and at 76 years of age, I still was not the oldest player there!"

Anyone interested in finding out more about Movers and Shakers can contact Mike on 07802 316031.

continues overleaf

GARDENS & FLOWERS

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY GARDEN in the grounds of St Catherine, Blackwell. Pop along to help water, plant and harvest. Info on 0121 445 1425.

ROWNEY GREEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY will not be holding their usual monthly meeting at the Village Hall on the second Thursday in June. They would, however like to advise everyone that a visit to Barnsdale Gardens, Nr Oakham, Leics has been arranged for Wednesday, 17 July. The cost is £33 per person which includes admission and cost of the coach. There is a tea room/cafe on site available for refreshments. Barnsdale Gardens is 38 individual gardens on an eight acre site. The coach will depart at 8.30am from Abbey Stadium. There are still spaces available and would welcome any members from local gardens clubs/societies to come along and join us on this excellent trip. If anyone is interested please contact Pat Davis on davies55@btinternet.com or tel; 07970 188227.

DODFORD GARDENING CLUB meets on the 2nd Monday each month (except August) usually in Dodford Village Hall at 7.45pm. New members and visitors welcome. More info at www.dodfordgardeningclub.co.uk or call Penny on 07706 153618.

BROMSGROVE FLOWER CLUB holds regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Meets at 2pm, at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B601AF. A yearly membership is available or come as a visitor & dip in & out. Refreshments & then a demonstration of flower arrangements and a raffle and you may be lucky and take one home. Further information on 07843758489 .

SOLIHULL & District Orchid Society meets on the 1st Sat each month at St George & St Teresa's Parish Centre, Station Road, Dorridge B39 8EZ. New members and visitors welcome. For information call 01926 747822 or email kenneth.johnson99@ntlworld.com. visit www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk.

ART, CRAFT & LITERATURE

THE WITHYBED POETS are local people who write poetry and share and discuss it with each other. You don't have to live in Withybed Green, though most of their meetings are there. They meet regularly every six weeks or so. They like to read to local audiences and some of us write "poetry on request." They are meeting on 3 July – for details and more information contact marygreen5005@gmail.com.

PAINTING & DRAWING If you enjoy painting and drawing, try this friendly community group which meets in the Rubery Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, on Monday mornings, 9am-1pm, catering for all ages and abilities. The facilities are excellent for both indoor and outdoor working depending on personal preference and weather conditions. Tea and coffee is provided. Places are available. For further information telephone: 0121 453 7716 (Fridays).

THE "CRAFTY LADIES" craft group meets every Monday morning in Alvechurch Library from 10am–1pm, with knitting, crocheting, sewing, quilting etc. More info on 01905 822722.

BURCOT WOODTURNING CLUB offers a friendly meeting place for woodturners of all abilities and experience. A varied programme includes demos, talks, hands-on practical evenings and visits to exhibitions. The group meets on the first Thurs each month, 7.15–9.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Visit www.burcotwoodturners.org.uk

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY is available to host day and short courses such as card-making or scrapbooking. If you have a skill to teach or share and would like to rent a space, call the Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

AVONCROFT ARTS SOCIETY at Avoncroft Arts Centre (Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR), runs tutored/ non-tutored classes in Art, Textiles, Ceramics, Embroidery and Dance. Contact AAS on 01527 833829 or avoncroftarts@btconnect.com

ALVECHURCH ART GROUP meets at the Baptist Hall (rear of church) every Tues from 1–3.30pm, using all mediums except oil. All welcome, especially beginners. Friendly tuition. Call Paul on 0121 445 5437 or drop in.

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY Readers Group meets in the library on the first Thursday of the month from 2pm–3pm. New members always welcome. And don't forget that you can access online audio and e-books 24/7, free of charge, by downloading the Borrowbox app. Visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/libraries

LICKEY HILLS ART SOCIETY, a friendly bunch of artists and those interested in art, meet at Longbridge Methodist Church, Bristol Road, B45 9TY, on the first Sat each month at 7.30pm. Open to artists and non-artists alike. For more info email Lyn lyndasharp2010@yahoo.com or come along – the members would love to see you.

SEW TOGETHER meets on Tuesday mornings from 9.30am to 12.30pm during term time at the new Cofton Village hall. They meet weekly to sew and socialise. All abilities are welcome and there are a variety of sewing machines to borrow if required. For more information contact Avril on sewtogether64@gmail.com or see Sew Together Cofton Hackett on Facebook.

BARNT GREEN ART CLUB meets at Barnt Green Scout and Guide Headquarters in Blackwell Road just beyond the Barnt Green Social Club. They run Tuesday morning and afternoon sessions with visiting tutors at 2 - 3 week intervals. Interested artists of all abilities are welcome. Please phone Jackie on 0121 445 4745 for details.

MARLBROOK QUILTERS meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. They are a small friendly group who would like to welcome new members. For more information contact Maggie Forknell 07973 313034 or Sheila Nunnerley 0121 445 2238.

THE SEASONS ART CLASS is an art course where you can discover your inner artist. Perfect for absolute beginners to improvers. Classes held at Rowney Green Village Hall, Bournheath Village Hall & Ullenhall Village Hall. Get in touch to find out more by emailing seasonsartredditch@outlook.com.

KINGS NORTON PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY meet at The Tennis Club, Grange Hill Road, Birmingham B38 8RE. For information contact Dave Wall Tel: 0121 458 2562, email: dave.walluk@virgin.net

FORGE MILL CREATIVE TEXTILE GROUP are a friendly group of enthusiastic local stitchers, both experienced and beginners. They meet on Friday mornings at Beoley Village Hall. They are a leisure learning and development group exploring various techniques and media to create textiles artwork. Please contact Lynda on 0121 445 3212 or Janet on 0121 445 4335 for more information.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

BABY Bounce & Rhyme is at Alvechurch Library Mondays 10–10.30am. Sing-a-long to traditional nursery rhymes and action songs.

STORYTIME at Alvechurch Library is on Tuesdays 11–11.30. Silly stories and tall tales for pre-school children to enjoy with parents and carers.

CURIOUS CUBS: An outdoor playgroup promoting nature and learning through play. Sessions run on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for walkers to five years. Based at Barnt Green Sports Club, Margesson Drive, B45 8LR. Visit www.curiouscubs.co.uk for more infomation and to book your place.

DRAMA TOTS: Award-winning imaginary play classes for children 18 months to 5 years. Classes run term-time on Monday mornings in Alvechurch/Thursdays in Finstall (other days/venues available). Contact Jo 07738 969460 for details.

TINY CHURCH (stay and play for under-5s and their carer) meets in Holy Trinity Church, Lickey, each Weds from 11.15am–12.30pm during term times. Games, toys, snacks and stories, and a time to meet together with God. Just pop along, ring 0121 445 1425 or email clive.rushton@btinternet.com

THE NATIONAL CHILDBIRTH TRUST (NCT) runs popular antenatal and postnatal courses to grow your knowledge and your network, allowing you to feel prepared and confident moving into the next chapter of your life. Discover and learn with other local parents-to-be, make vital connections and life-long friends in your community. Held at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green. www.nct.org.uk/courses-workshops or call 0300 330 0700.

SOLIHULL BABY MASSAGE is at Rowney Green Village Hall on Tuesdays. A relaxed environment for parents and babies to bond through massage. Visit www.solihullbabymassage.co.uk

RHYTHM TIME is a fun, award-winning developmental music classes for the under 5's. Classes in Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Bromsgrove, Redditch and lots more. Contact Vicky 07712 675 697 or visit www.rhythmtime.net

NEW ROAD PARENTS SUPPORT for parents of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans children meets monthly in Bromsgrove. A confidential, voluntary, small support group for parents by parents. Close links with FFLAG. Visit www.newroadparents.org, email newroadparents@gmail.com or get in touch via Facebook @New Road Parents Lgbtqi+ Support Group.

THEATRETRAIN Bromsgrove, performing arts for children 4-18yrs. Saturdays 10.30am-1.30pm. For a half-price trial email bromsgrove@theatretrain.co.uk or call 07766 724834.

TUTORING both online and in-person for Maths KS1 and KS2. English KS1 through to GCSE. For more information message 'Tutoring with Penny' on Facebook or email penny_foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

PRE-SCHOOL BALLET - Pre-school (2 ½ - 4 yrs) ballet held at Barnt Green Baptist Church on Monday mornings from 10am. Contact dancingpointe@outlook.com for further details.

STAY & PLAY for under 5s and their carers running each Thursday from 9:30-11:30am during term time at Barnt Green Baptist Church, Bittel Road. Just pop along for play, singing & story time. Email familypastoral@bgb.org.uk

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

FINSTALL CROSS WI meets at Finstall Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. For more info see www.finstallcrosswi.org or email finstallcrosswi@gmail.com

BEOLEY WI meets on the first Tuesday of each month in Beoley Village Hall at 7pm. More info from Joan Lovett on 01527 584047 or email beoleysec@wfedwi.org.uk

BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT WI meets at 7pm on the second Tuesday every month between April and November, and at 12pm December to March, at Bentley Village Hall (B97 5TB).
More information from Helen Spence (01527 822622)or email bentleypauncefootsec@wfedwi.org.uk

BARNT GREEN WI meets at the Baptist Church at 7.30pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. For more information: Jenny Jellie 07983 865372.

ALVECHURCH WI meets on the second Monday each month in Alvechurch Village Hall, at 7.30pm. For more information email Lin Neal lin.neal@hotmail.com or alvechurchpres@wfedwi.org.uk

LICKEY WI usually meets on the first Tues every month at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall (Trinity Centre), Old Birmingham Road, Lickey. More info from Jenny Ryder on 0121 445 1872, Lickeywi@gmail.com or www.lickeywi.wordpress.com

HILLSIDE AT ALVECHURCH WI meets at 7.45pm on the first Weds each month at The Ark, Alvechurch. For more information contact Marian Clemons on 07586354826 or follow them on Facebook: Hillside WI at Alvechurch

BLACKWELL & BURCOT WI meets at Burcot Village Hall on the second Weds each month, at 2pm. For info call President Mrs Barbara Knight on 0121 445 3456.

HOPWOOD WI meets at Hopwood Village Hall on the first Thurs of the month at 7.30pm. For more information call Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668.

ST CATHERINE'S BLACKWELL WI meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 7.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Contact Sue Barrett for more information on 01527 596092 or susanbarratt222@gmail.com

RUBERY WI meets on the 2nd Weds of the month at 7.30pm at Beacon Church Centre, when there are speakers, activities and competitions. The 4th Weds of each month is the craft evening. Non-members are welcome. Contact Judie1055@yahoo.co.uk 07810765314.

FAIRFIELD WI meet at Fairfield village hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm. For further details contact Carol Hine at fairfieldwi1932@gmail.com

VILLAGE VENUES FOR HIRE

HOPWOOD VILLAGE HALL is available for hire for parties, groups and gatherings. Please contact Booking Secretary Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668 or visit www.hopwoodvillagehall.co.uk

TARDEBIGGE COMMUNITY HALL for hire: large, bright facility for functions, clubs, societies and all activities. To book call 07763 446902 or email tchbookings@gmail.com

THE WHEEL COMMUNITY ROOM IN BLACKWELL has daytime, evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire —more info on 0121 445 1425.

THE TRINITY CENTRE IN LICKEY has evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire – more info on 0121 445 1425.

BARNT GREEN PARISH CENTRE has large and medium sized lounges available for regular hire for some morning and early afternoon sessions each week. Please contact the Parish Administrator on 0121 447 7097.

THE ARK AT ST LAURENCE has a large hall and kitchen, and smaller upper room for hire, for one-off and regular hires. More information and bookings please contact Lynda on 0121 447 7955 or email admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE HALL is available for hire to groups, clubs, societies, and private parties. The hall has a stage, PA system, kitchen and bar area. There is also a smaller conference room available for hire. Enquiries to the Hall Manager Andrea Ottley on 07455892909 or hallmanager.avh@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH CRICKET CLUB PAVILION is available for hire: weekdays for community groups/clubs/societies, evening functions/private parties. Licensed bar, dance floor, kitchen area and great outdoor space. Enquiries to Stuart Brereton via 07775 714165 or ahcc.bar@gmail.com

FAIRFIELD VILLAGE HALL is available to hire for functions, groups and parties. It has a large hall with kitchen facilities. Contact the booking secretary Andrew on 07762749943 or bookings@fvh.org.uk. See website for details www.fvh.org.uk

ROWNEY GREEN VILLAGE HALL has a large hall, with stage and sprung floor (ideal for dance and exercise) and two smaller rooms. Available for one off or regular hire, ample parking. Email: admin@rowneygreenvillagehall.org

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY HALL is available for groups, functions and parties. The large hall is complemented by a new kitchen and a grassed area. Details at blackwellcommunityhall.co.uk.

FEATURE IN WHAT'S ON

If you would like to feature in the next What's On section, the deadline for submissions for the July/August issue of *TheVillage* is 15 June 2024. For more details, please email: info@villageonline.co.uk

TheVillage *Noticeboard*

WANTED : RENTAL PROPERTY

Professional couple looking for a two bedroom unfurnished house to rent in Alvechurch or surrounding areas. Quiet location preferred.
Gas central heating, good WiFi, off-street parking and garden. Very tidy, non-smokers with excellent references. Please contact: 07925 857453 or 07951 513317

CLEANER WANTED

Barnt Green Social Club are advertising a role for a regular cleaner on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.
Hours are 9am to 11am, £15 per hour.
For more information and to apply for the position, please call: 07798 831618

Happy Birthday Delilah!

A special Happy Birthday to Delilah from Aston Fields who turns six in June.
We hope you have a lovely day, lots of love Mummy, Daddy and Freddie.

Oakley is four!

We'd like to wish Oakley a huge happy birthday, full of cake, friends and fun.
Mummy, Daddy, Lottie-Lou and all your family send you lots of love.

To place an advert or announcement on TheVillage Noticeboard, please email the details to: editor@villageonline.co.uk

** Please note that TheVillage Noticeboard is not for business advertising and announcements.*
Please be aware that there are limited spaces available and there is a small charge to post on the board, please enquire for more details.
We reserve the right to refuse or edit submissions for reasons of space or legality.

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*T&Cs apply.
Until 31.8.24